

Hafa Adai!

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PRC citizens sentenced to federal prison for drug trafficking. **PAGE 3**

\$1

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## CUC's water loss at 64% in Oct.; many leaks found after quakes

By **FERDIE DE LA TORRE**  
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REPORTER

In October this year, the Commonwealth Utilities Corp. produced a total of 252,374,400 gallons of water, yet the total amount billed was only 90,009,539 gallons. That equates to a non-revenue water loss of 64% on Saipan. That means more than half of the water CUC is producing is lost and is not earning money for the agency.

This was learned from Kevin O. Watson, CUC Water & Wastewater Division deputy

executive director, who also disclosed in his monthly report during the CCC board

meeting on Thursday that there were many water leaks in October compared to the

previous month; they suspect it's because of earthquakes.

See CUC on Page 4



Commonwealth Utilities Corp. Water & Wastewater Division deputy executive director Kevin O. Watson, extreme right, presents his monthly report during the CUC board meeting on Thursday.

'New visa for Chinese tourists something we need to look into'

By **FERDIE DE LA TORRE**  
ferdie\_delatorre@saipantribune.com  
REPORTER

Gov. Arnold I. Palacios is unsure if the promulgation of a new visa type is going to change anything with respect to Chinese tourists coming to the CNMI, but he



Palacios

acknowledged it is something that they need to look into. Palacios said in an interview last week that he has learned about Sen. Jude U. Hofschneider's (R-Tinian) joint resolution that asks him to advocate for the increased security for the tourism industry, through the promulgation of what's called the CNMI Economic Vitality & Security Travel

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## \$79M for 3 divert airfield projects in NDAA conference report — Kili

By **FERDIE DE LA TORRE**  
ferdie\_delatorre@saipantribune.com  
REPORTER

The U.S. House of Representatives and Senate Armed Services Committees released Wednesday the conference report for H.R. 2670, the



Sablan

National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2024, with several provisions specifically beneficial to the Marianas, including \$79 million for continued appropriations for three Air Force divert airfield projects in Tinian.

That's according to  
See \$79M on Page 4

## COP28

### Observers see OPEC 'panicking' as climate talks narrow in on possible fossil fuel phase-out

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP)—Veteran negotiators at the United Nations climate talks Saturday said that the push to wean the world from dirty fossil fuels had gained so much momentum that they had poked a power-

ful enemy: the oil industry.

Late Friday, multiple news sources reported that the leader of OPEC, the powerful oil cartel, wrote to member countries earlier this week urging them to block any language

See OPEC on Page 4



PETER DEJONG

COP28 president Sultan al-Jaber, center, and COP28 CEO Adnan Amin speak ahead of a stocktaking plenary session at the COP28 U.N. Climate Summit, Saturday, Dec. 9, 2023, in Dubai, United Arab Emirates.

## INSIDE



### LOCAL

Assistant secretary for Insular and International Affairs Carmen G. Cantor concluded a weeklong trip to the Pacific.

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### BUSINESS

Guam Business Magazine is pleased to announce the nominees for the 2023 Guam Business Magazine Executive of the Year.

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### NATION

Hunter Biden has been hit with new criminal charges in California accusing him of scheming to avoid paying his taxes.

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# Local

## 'CUC should address high utility charges; people are suffering'

By **FERDIE DE LA TORRE**  
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REPORTER

Rep. Roman Benavente (Ind-Saipan) urged the Commonwealth Utilities Corp. board of directors and management last Thursday to come up with a way to lower utility costs as a lot of people in the CNMI are suffering financially.

Speaking at the CUC board meeting, Benavente said he has received a lot of complaints about CUC's method

of computing its fuel charge, the Fuel Adjustment Charge, or FAC, which used to be called the Levelized Energy Adjustment Clause, or LEAC.

"People out there basically wants to know exactly what those LEAC charges are. Where do they go?" he asked.

The lawmaker said he has received information from people, including some CUC employees, that although CUC owns the water wells, people are still being charged

for their use.

"So we have to come up with a better solution if possible," Benavente said.

CUC acting executive director Betty G. Terlaje explained in a later interview that what Benavente was referring to was what she discussed in the Senate the last time they brought up that there's bad debt in the FAC.

Terlaje said it's perhaps a matter of doing some community outreach and doing it in

layman's term so people can understand their utility bills and understand what those charges are.

She said the FAC, which is the charge for the use of fuel to run CUC's power plants, is a rate that is put together by CUC and then it goes to Commonwealth Public Utilities Commission and the rate

consultants for approval. The CPUC, along with CUC consultants, deliberate on the rate to make sure it is a full-cost recovery rate, which means it is pegged only at a rate that's enough to allow CUC to buy fuel and no more. In some cases, Terlaje said, they disagree, but at the end of the day, CPUC decides what the final

FAC rates going to be.

"They will either approve what we request or sometimes they will say 'No, you need to charge for this item because it's not included in your rate,'" Terlaje said.

She said CPUC is doing due diligence to make sure that they're regulating the entity correctly.



FERDIE DE LA TORRE

Rep. Roman Benavente (Ind-Saipan) speaks about the complaints he received from many people about their high utility billings during the Commonwealth Utilities Corp. board meeting yesterday.

## Ex-BMV chief faces possible 60-month sentence

By **KIMBERLY B. ESMORES**  
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REPORTER

Former Department of Public Safety Bureau of Motor Vehicles director Juana Deleon Guerrero faces a possible incarceration of 60 months or about five years, based on the recommendation of the U.S. Attorney's Office.

In the sentencing recommendation assistant U.S. Attorney Albert S. Flores Jr. filed with the U.S. District Court for the NMI, he is proposing a 60-month prison sentence for Deleon Guerrero, who is set to be sentenced on Dec. 15.

Deleon Guerrero pleaded guilty in June to one count of conspiracy to unlawfully

Deleon Guerrero's lawyer, Robert Torres, has proposed a sentence of 36 months or three years.

"A term of 36 months [is a] sufficient sentence and one which is no greater than necessary to achieve the ends of justice," he said.

According to Flores, the U.S. government recommends that Deleon Guerrero be sentenced to 60 months in prison and be penalized \$15,000 because of the public harm caused by her crime.

He acknowledged that his office's recommended sentence is above the incarceration guideline range reflected in the Final Presentence Investigation Report.

Based on the guidelines, Deleon Guerrero's crime would be placed at a total offense level of 20 with a criminal history category of I, resulting in a range of 33-34 months incarceration. However, Flores argues that the public harm made the crime worse.

"A sentence above the guideline range is warranted in defendant's case, because the public harm caused by defendant is practically impossible

See EX-BMV on Page 4

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## PRC citizens sentenced to federal prison for drug trafficking

United States Attorney for the Districts of Guam and the Northern Mariana Islands Shawn Anderson announced that Chun Yang and Yurong Wang, citizens of the People's Republic of China, were sentenced by the District Court for the Northern Mariana Islands for conspiracy to possess over 50 grams of methamphetamine with the intent to distribute, in violation of 21 U.S.C. §§ 846 and 841(a)(1).

Yang, 46, was sentenced to 70 months incarceration, five years of supervised release following release, 100 hours of community service in lieu of a fine, and a \$100 special assessment fee. Yang was also ordered to report to U.S. immigration officials for deportation proceedings upon

release from prison.

Wang, 50, was sentenced to 46 months incarceration, five years of supervised release following release, 100 hours of community service in lieu of a fine, and a \$100 special assessment fee. Wang was also ordered to report to U.S. immigration officials for deportation proceedings upon release from prison.

On June 21, 2022, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands Customs and Biosecurity Agents discovered 1,809.80 grams of methamphetamine inside of a mail parcel during a routine inspection at the U.S. Post Office on the island of Saipan. The parcel was mailed from California. Upon discovery of the methamphetamine, agents

with the Drug Enforcement Administration joined the investigation. On June 22, 2022, DEA and the CNMI Department of Public Safety Drug Enforcement Task Force conducted surveillance while the parcel was claimed from the post office, transported after exchanges between multiple persons and vehicles, and ultimately delivered to Wang. After receiving the package, Wang brought it to an apartment where she met Yang and Xing Rui Gao (also



Anderson

a PRC citizen). The three individuals intended to distribute the drugs on Saipan.

They were promptly arrested after opening the package.

Gao was charged separately and pled guilty on Oct. 4, 2023. Sentencing is scheduled for Feb. 23, 2024.

None of the defendants had lawful immigration status at the time of the offense.

"This case demonstrates the effectiveness of partnerships among Commonwealth and federal law enforcement,"

said Anderson. "A substantial amount of methamphetamine was kept out of our communities. I applaud the efforts of all involved in bringing these defendants to justice."

"Operation Cloudy Day" was part of an Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Forces investigation. OCDETF identifies, disrupts, and dismantles the highest-level drug traffickers, money launderers, gangs, and transnational criminal organizations that threaten the United States by using a prosecutor-led, intelligence-driven, multi-agency approach that leverages the strengths of federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies

against criminal networks.

This investigation was led by the United States Drug Enforcement Administration with cooperation from the CNMI Customs and Biosecurity Agency, the CNMI DETF, and prosecuted by Albert S. Flores, Jr., Assistant United States Attorney in the District of the Northern Mariana Islands. (PR)

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## OSHA program aims to stem fatality rates, promote safety in landscaping and horticultural industries in US

**SAN FRANCISCO**—The U.S. Department of Labor announced last Friday that its Occupational Safety and Health Administration has launched a Regional Emphasis Program to promote workplace safety and protect people employed in the landscaping and horticultural industries in four western states and three Pacific territories, including the Northern Marianas.

From 2011-2021, the Bureau of Labor Statistics reported 1,072 work-related fatalities in the landscaping and groundskeeping industry. Of these, the 234 industry worker

deaths in 2021 exceeded the national averages for fatalities, injuries and illnesses in other industries, a result that prompted OSHA's action.

For most landscaping industry workers, a day on the job means facing the risk of amputations, falls, electrocution, excessive noise, heat illness and ergonomic injuries; dangers associated with motor vehicle and machinery operations; and harm caused by animals, insects, pesticide and other chemical exposures.

"By instituting a new regional emphasis program for

See OSHA on Page 4

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# Missing man is found

By **KIMBERLY B. ESMORES**  
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REPORTER

After a day-long search, the Department of Public Safety

was able to locate Joe William “Joey” McDoulett, who was reported missing by his family over the weekend.

DPS patrol officers located

McDoulett at approximately 12:21am yesterday walking along the shoulder of the road by Saipan Shipping in Lower Base.

Police said McDoulett was found in stable condition, with no visible injuries.

Per standard procedure, the Department of Fire and Emergency Medical Services arrived and transported McDoulett to the Commonwealth Health Center for medical evaluation.

DPS has not released any additional information

about the matter.

McDoulett was reported missing by family members last Friday, Dec. 8. He was last seen leaving his home at about 12:45pm that day.

On Saturday, Dec. 9, McDoulett’s friends and family gathered in search of him with the party

scoping sites up north like Grotto, Bird Island, etc. McDoulett has been an attorney for over 20 years, providing

professional legal services to the CNMI community.

He has made a career of government service as a U.S. Army Judge Advocate General’s Corps officer and a special agent with the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

McDoulett was also the director of immigration services for Catholic Charities in Oklahoma City.

He and his wife own a dive shop on Saipan.



McDoulett

## OPEC

From page 1

that would phase out or phase down fossil fuels. The news had the effect of a thunderclap, shining a light on host and petrostate United Arab Emirates, which clearly has oil interests but also wants to show the world that it can lead the conference toward a substantive result.

Environmental activists, still smarting after decades of soft power from oil interests

keeping such discussions from seeing the light of day, smirked at signs that the mighty cartel was circling the wagons.

“I think they’re panicking,” said Alden Meyer, an analyst with climate think tank E3G “Maybe the Saudis can’t do on their own what they’ve been doing for 30 years and block the process.”

Former Ireland President Mary Robinson said, “They’re scared. I think they’re worried.”

Robinson, co-chair of the retired leaders group The El-

ders, is now a prominent climate campaigner. She said that OPEC is concerned “gives me hope.” Last month she clashed publicly with the president of the COP28 negotiations, Sultan al-Jaber, who is also CEO of the Emirates’ national oil company.

China’s climate envoy Xie Zhenhua called this year’s climate conference the “most difficult” of his long career. He said the contentious phase-out issue could be solved in one or two days.

Germany’s climate envoy,

Jennifer Morgan, suggested any call for blocking a deal would be felt most by small countries vulnerable of sea level rise caused by global warming.

“Right now, countries here are fighting for their lives. The small islands, and most countries here, are engaging very actively on this discussion in a real way,” she said in an interview. “And I think it is obviously not responsible to have a position that could mean — would mean — the life and death of many million people.”

## CUC

From page 1

Watson also disclosed they posted 66 work orders to repair leaks, four mainline leaks, and four-meter leaks in October. This, he said, equates to a total loss through these leaks of 1,898,984 gallons in October, compared to only 213,319 gallons in September.

Watson said all of these leaks were responded to and repaired in an expedited manner. “We respond to 100% and we don’t delay. We do it immediately,” Watson said.

He said there were several instances when multiple breaks occurred in a single day.

In one case, he said, they had one large 8-inch leak near a school. As soon as that was repaired, he got a phone call 30 minutes later, telling him they had another major line leak.

Watson said those leaks coincided with the occurrence of

earthquakes in the Northern Mariana Islands.

“We suspect the ground movement had something to do with it,” he said, adding that they’re tracking that even closely now and it helps them explain why the non-revenue water loss is higher in one month than another.

CUC also tracks water lines damaged by contractors. In October, Watson said, they had 20 cases of water lines damaged by contractors compared to only seven in September.

He said the total loss through contractor damaged pipes was 41,327 gallons. In the previous month it was 14,339 gallons.

In response to board chair Janice A. Tenorio’s question, Watson said they usually don’t issue an advisory telling customers about the damaged pipe because contractors usually repair the damage within an hour or less.

CUC does put out a public advisory if the repair will take longer, he said.

He said contractors immediately repair any damage because any delay would also affect their work.

Watson said they posted three new water meter installations in October; in the previous month they had 10.

He said the water meter relocation work orders completed was one, and they had two new water meter relocation work orders created that will be done in November.

Watson said the new water meter change outs work orders are for existing meters where the meter had failed and the billing office sends their division a work order or notice that these need to be changed.

He said there were 111 of those changed out in October and there were 41 new work orders created that will also be put on their list.

On Tinian, Watson said the

Bureau of Environmental & Coastal Quality well permit was approved.

As for the wastewater division, Watson said the total sewage usage was at 36,250,725 gallons.

Right now, he said, the Agangan Wastewater Treatment Plant and Sadog Tasi Wastewater Treatment Plant operate with only one aerator basin for collecting and treating the wastewater. Watson said the Pacific Engineering Projects contractor is working on rebuilding the clarifier at the Sadog Tasi Treatment Plant. Watson said they are moving forward with being able to introduce that newly rebuilt clarifier in operation this week.

He said there is a pending rehabilitation project with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and Additional Supplemental Appropriation for Disaster Relief Act funds for the electrical and lighting repairs and plant upgrades.

## VISA

From page 1

Authorization Program.

Once that resolution goes through the legislative process, that’s when the Palacios-Apatang administration will look into it, he said.

He said if the resolution passes the Senate, it will go to the House of Representatives, so they will study it in the coming days and see if there is a need to possibly advocate for

that program.

EVS-TAP was one of the recommendations of 902 Consultation special representatives in their report dated May 15, 2019, to then-president Donald Trump.

As envisioned by the 902 panels, the CNMI EVS-TAP would be a subprogram of the Guam-CNMI Visa Program that balances visitor ease with enhanced security provisions and transparency.

According to the U.S. Department of Homeland Secu-

urity, the CNMI EVS-TAP will allow prescreened nationals of the People’s Republic of China to travel to the CNMI without a visa under specific conditions.

Hofschneider’s Senate Joint Resolution 23-07 asks Palacios to request for the publication of the interim rule creating the CNMI-EVS-TAP by DHS.

Palacios said the U.S. House of Representatives is predominantly Republican right now, and this is a Republican House

that’s calling to take away the visa waiver for Chinese tourists entering the CNMI.

“So I don’t know how successful we’re [going to] be with them. But it’s something that we need to probably formally consider,” Palacios said.

Four U.S. senators and 28 U.S. House members signed a letter dated Nov. 30, 2023, requesting DHS to revoke the discretionary parole program that allows it to let Chinese tourists enter the CNMI without a tourist visa.

their required medical examinations in the Marianas.

Additional NDAA provisions include a 5.2% pay raise for service members, expanded Basic Needs Allowance to assist low-income service members supporting a family, reduced childcare fees for military families, and continuation of the Pacific Deterrence Initiative to deter conflict in the Indo-Pacific region.

## EX-BMV

From page 2

to quantify,” he said.

Flores added that Deleon Guerrero’s actions endangered public safety by authorizing unqualified drivers to drive.

“As the long-standing chief of the BMV, and former acting commissioner of the CNMI Department of Public Safety (defendant was serving as the acting DPS commissioner when the Federal Bureau of Investigation executed a search warrant at the BMV on Dec. 16, 2022), or in other words, the senior law enforcement officer of the CNMI, defendant was entrusted to serve in her position as a leader and enforcer of the law. Instead, she fostered an environment of systemic corruption, her actions endangered public safety by arming unqualified drivers to operate vehicles on the roadways, and she grossly violated the trust of the public which damaged the credibility of the CNMI government. Tragically, it will be a long road for the people of the CNMI to regain the trust of the CNMI BMV,” he said.

Torres argues that sentencing guidelines calculations by the Probation Office establish a guideline range of 33-41 months using U.S. Sentencing Guidelines, which is enhanced guideline range due to the number of driver’s licenses involved.

“Even if sustained, the Pro-

bation Office also considered and included enhancements for abusing a position of public trust and for being an organizer or leader of a criminal activity that was extensive and/or involved five or more participants. A sentence of 36 months is the mid-point of the guideline sentencing range,” he said.

According to the unsealed information, from about Jan. 1, 2020, through about Dec. 20, 2022, on at least 50 occasions, Deleon Guerrero conspired with Li Yongde, or “Ivan,” fellow BMV employees, residents of the CNMI without lawful immigration status, and others, to produce CNMI driver licenses for 10 individuals without valid and current legal immigration status.

Specifically, Deleon Guerrero knowingly permitted Ivan, a citizen of the People’s Republic of China without lawful immigration status, to bring other citizens of the PRC and of other nationalities without lawful immigration status to the BMV, where those foreign citizens were subsequently issued fraudulent CNMI driver licenses.

Ivan allegedly charged these individuals around \$1,500 to \$1,700 for a new license and around \$300 to \$400 for a renewal license.

Ivan would accept payments from foreign citizens and bring them to the BMV where they would meet with BMV staff, including Deleon Guerrero.

## OSHA

From page 3

landscaping industry employers in areas of federal jurisdiction, tribal lands, military bases and particular waterfront areas, OSHA aims to reduce the high fatality and injury rates we’ve seen in this industry while enhancing workplace safety,” said OSHA regional administrator James Wulff in San Francisco. “By intensifying our focus on the landscaping industry, we can show employers how they can protect their workers better and avoid needless tragedies.”

The new regional emphasis program includes employers in American Samoa, Arizona,

California, Guam, Hawaii, the Northern Mariana Islands and Nevada. Under the program, OSHA will conduct safety and health inspections of landscaping and horticultural industry employers and focus on tree care and related services, including tree and bush planting, pruning, bracing, spraying, removal and surgery; commercial lawn and landscape maintenance; and utility line tree-trimming services.

OSHA encourages small employers to use the agency’s On-Site Consultation Program, which provides no-cost assistance with safety strategies and compliance with federal safety and health standards. (USDOL)

## \$79M

From page 1

Delegate Gregorio Kilili C. Sablan (D-MP) in his *e-kilili* newsletter over the weekend, adding that approval of the conference agreement is expected to be considered on the House floor next week.

Of the \$79 million allocated for Tinian projects, \$26 million is for Phase 1

(increment 3) of the airfield development, \$21 million is to install fuel tanks with pipeline and hydrant (increment 3), and \$32 million is for a parking apron (increment 3), Sablan said.

The first and second phases of the divert airfield will allow the U.S. Air Force to use Tinian as an alternative landing site or a divert airfield for its planes in case Anderson Air Force Base in

Guam is inaccessible due to war or calamities.

The groundbreaking to mark the start of the construction work for the divert airfield project was held in February 2022. The project is expected to be completed by 2025.

Sablan said there is also language accompanying H.R. 2670 directing the U.S. Department of Defense to ensure that students applying to the service academies can receive



# Cantor highlights DOI investments in Pacific visit



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR  
Gov. Arnold I. Palacios and Lt. Gov. David M. Apatang met with Department of Interior assistant secretary for Insular and International Affairs Carmen G. Cantor and Abdiel Rozu, special assistant to the assistant secretary, about a number of issues, including the status of OIA-funded projects, CNMI economic initiatives, convening 902 talks, and other matters. They were joined by Harry Blanco, field representative for the Department of Interior Office of Insular Affairs



Assistant secretary for Insular and International Affairs Carmen G. Cantor concluded a weeklong trip to the Pacific, where she met with regional leaders and U.S. government interagency partners to highlight the Department of the Interior's commitment to the insular areas and Freely Associated States.

In Honolulu, Hawai'i, Cantor and staff from the department's Office of Insular Affairs hosted interagency partners and U.S. Embassies' chiefs of mission at the biannual Federal Working Group on the FAS. The meeting facilitated the exchange of best practices, addressed program delivery challenges and discussed pooling federal resources

for crucial projects. Over 35 federal program personnel from 20 agencies attended.

Traveling to Guam, Cantor met with Lt. Gov. Josh Tenorio, engaged local leaders, and conducted site visits to key projects receiving funding from OIA. These visits included a ribbon-cutting ceremony at the Guam Trades Academy, where she highlighted the positive impact of solar panels on reducing operational costs and discussed the suitability of renewable energy technology for Guam's environment. Other OIA-funded visits encompassed the governor's complex building renovation and the Micronesian Resource Center One-Stop-Shop, aiding individuals and families migrating to Guam from the FAS.

Cantor also visited a project

site funded by the America the Beautiful Challenge initiative, focusing on improving ecosystem and community health and food security by removing invasive species, particularly little fire ants, an invasive

species that poses an environmental, economic, and human health threat on the island. The project involves community outreach to empower private landowners in controlling LFA and preventing its spread.

While in Guam, Cantor also participated as a special guest in Operation Christmas Drop, the longest-running humanitarian mission operated by the

Department of Defense and regional allies. OCD delivers essential supplies to remote insular areas, a tradition that started in 1952 and highlights the United States' ongoing commitment to the Micronesian region while providing a multilateral training opportunity for Pacific allies.

The assistant secretary also visited the Northern Mariana

Islands, where she met with Gov. Arnold I. Palacios and academic leaders to discuss disaster recovery issues, specifically addressing building construction and renovations was areas destroyed by Super Typhoon Yutu in 2018. The visit included a site visit to an OIA-funded pier rail and Ranger docking station project on Managaha Island. (DOI)



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**JOB VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENT # 02-2024**  
Opening date: November 24, 2023 Closing date: December 22, 2023

<b>Location: SAIPAN</b> Position(s): (1) Saipan Airport Manager (1) Comptroller	<b>SALARY</b> \$70,000 (UNGRADED) \$80,000 (UNGRADED)
<b>Location: ROTA</b> Position(s): (1) Rota Ports Manager	<b>SALARY</b> \$55,000 (UNGRADED)

Employment Application must be accompanied with a copy of all required diploma/certificates and/or official sealed transcripts, original copy of recent police record not more than six (6) months old, original copy of U.S. Department of Defense Form DD214 for retired members or veterans of our Armed Forces, and other documents as required for the position. Public Law 11-70 requires that all male applicants age 18 to 25 years old must submit documentation evidencing his registration with the Federal Selective Service System. All applications and required documents must be submitted to the **CPA Administration Office, 2nd Floor Arrival Building, Francisco C. Ada/Saipan International Airport or CPA Administration Office, Tinian International Airport, or Benjamin Taisacan Manglona International Airport.** Failure to provide any of the required documents will result in automatic disqualification. Certain vacancies may require written and/or physical test. Selected applicants will be subjected to pre-employment drug screening, 10-year Criminal History Record Check and 49 CFR Part 1542.209(d) Requirements. CPA reserves the right to waive or implement other qualifications to meet its needs. The deadline for submission of applications and required documents to the CPA Administration Office (Saipan) or at the Tinian International Airport or Benjamin Taisacan Manglona International Airport is no later than **5:00P.M. on Friday, December 22, 2023.**

Detailed information on qualifications and position descriptions for the above positions may be picked up along with the application form from Monday-Friday, 8:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M., except on holidays, at the CPA Administration Office (2nd Floor) of the Francisco C. Ada/Saipan International Airport, Arrival Terminal or CPA Admin. Office at the Tinian International Airport or at the Benjamin Taisacan Manglona International Airport. For additional information, please contact the CPA Human Resources Office by email at lorna.robert@cnmiports.com and hrspecialist@cnmiports.com or by phone at (670)237-6500.

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LEO B. TUDELA  
Executive Director



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**Francisco C. Ada/Saipan International Airport  
"Car Rental Concession"**  
**Request for Proposals**  
**for: CPA-RFP-001-24**  
**CPA Concession No. CRS-2023-01**

The Commonwealth Ports Authority ("CPA" or "Authority") is soliciting proposals for the award of one (1) concession granting the privilege to provide motor vehicle rental services to the traveling public (including the provision of insurance related to motor vehicles rented in the operation of such motor vehicle rental services) at the Francisco C. Ada/Saipan International Airport ("Car Rental Concession"). The successful proposer will be expected to provide motor vehicle rental services in accordance with its concession and concession agreement at the Francisco C. Ada/Saipan International Airport for a period of two years with an option upon entering into a concession agreement with the Authority.

The date of issuance of CPA-Concession No. CRS-2023-01 is **December 6, 2023**, and it can be obtained at the issuing office: CPA Administration Office, Saipan International Airport, P.O. Box 501055, Saipan, MP 96950, Second floor of Arrival terminal at the Saipan International Airport.

Proposals must be addressed to Commonwealth Ports Authority, Attn: Car Rental Concessions Evaluation Committee, CPA Administration Office, Saipan International Airport, P.O. Box 501055, Saipan, MP 96950; and submitted to and received by the CPA Administration Office (second floor of arrival terminal at the Saipan International Airport) **by or before 4:00 p.m. on January 9, 2024**, at which time the proposal period shall expire. Proposals must be accompanied with a non-refundable administrative fee of \$100.00. Payment shall be made in cash, credit card, or cashier's check payable to the Commonwealth Ports Authority to defray the costs associated with handling and considering the proposal. Proposals are not required to include a prepaid minimum concession fee.

The Commonwealth Ports Authority reserves the right to cancel this RFP and to reject any and all proposals in accordance with its Concession Regulations (NMIAC Chapter 40-70).

/s/  
LEO B. TUDELA  
Executive Director



# Andersen's Port Dawgs organize first rodeo



US AIR FORCE

Participants of the Port Dawgs Rodeo pose for a photo at Andersen Air Force Base, Guam, Nov. 14, 2023. This event was held to showcase the Multi-Capable Airmen concept and develop esprit de corps through friendly competition.

The small island of Guam, home to Andersen Air Force Base, plays a giant role in guaranteeing a free and open Indo-Pacific. Much of that responsibility falls on the shoulders of airmen classified as air transportation specialists, the "Port Dawgs." The Port Dawgs plan, build, and transfer cargo and personnel to send it to their final destinations.

As part of an ongoing effort to develop Multi-Capable Airmen, the Port Dawgs of Andersen AFB decided to organize a friendly competition among themselves, igniting Andersen AFB's first Port Dawg Rodeo. The winning team of the rodeo will receive a trophy carved by one of their own and more importantly, bragging rights.

"It's the Olympics of the air transportation career field," said Tech. Sgt. John Navarro, lead organizer for the event. "It's to measure our job knowledge, skills, and so we can see that we can rely on our own partners."

Four teams were formed for each squadron with air transportation specialists, 734th Air Mobility Squadron, 36th

Tactical Advisory Squadron, 36th Contingency Response Squadron, and 36th Logistics Readiness Squadron.

The competition consisted of five events, each highlighting important responsibilities of the Port Dawg field. The events consisted of building cargo onto pallets, marking the center of balance on a 25,000-lb loader, forklift handling, and a simulated aircraft load/unload. The final event consisted of a demanding confidence course, where teams tested their physical fitness completing various challenges around the base. All events were timed, with time added on for penalties.

Each of the challenges provided opportunities for Port Dawgs to practice skills they might not be proficient in.

"I haven't been a chalker so it was good for me to learn that it's important not to move the chalk when the All Terrain 10k Forklift is moving," said Senior Airman Lydia Granados, a member of the 36 LRS team. "If I hadn't known that I could have really gotten hurt, it taught me the little details that we wouldn't learn in a book."



US AIR FORCE

Members of the 36th Tactical Advisory Squadron carry a shipping pallet during a rodeo at Andersen Air Force Base, Guam, Nov. 14, 2023.

Aside from the fun in competing against one other, this competition also serves to showcase the capabilities of our island's cargo handling.

"You have four different agencies with the same Air Force Specialty Codes but four different mission sets coming together to put their job knowledge, teamwork, and fitness to the test," said Staff Sgt. Mark Oglesby, a member of the 734 AMS team. "By doing this you give each team a chance to work together as a team to test their abilities in fast paced situations in hopes of Port Dawg bragging rights. Ultimately building camaraderie and morale within each squadron itself."

Events like these emphasize the value of working together to accomplish missions and provide opportunities for Port Dawgs to network with one another.

"You get to put names to faces and talk with people that you're competing with. They can be people you know, you don't know, and you can learn about them and make friends with them. It's a good way to make connections in an informal setting. So that way when we are furthering the mission we know who to talk to, who to go to, and you know what their capabilities are," said Senior Airman Lydia Granados, a member of the 36 LRS team.

At the end of the rodeo, it was the 734 AMS which took home the gold. The 734 AMS success in this first competition establishes the installation's Port Dawg bar that is expected to rise exponentially. The event, however, serves as a reminder of the exceptional Port Dawg skill set that is invaluable to Andersen AFB's mission, operation plan pacing, and execution. (PR)

## WESTPAC to address final fishing regulations recommendations for proposed US PRINMS

HONOLULU, Hawaii—

The Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council will meet next week to discuss its final recommendations for fishing regulations in the proposed Pacific Remote Islands National Marine Sanctuary. At its last meeting in September, council members initially found that existing regulations may already meet the goals and objectives of the proposed sanctuary. This decision was based on a recommendation from the council's Scientific and Statistical Committee after a thorough review of existing rules and regulations in the Council PRI Fishery Ecosystem Plan and available data from NOAA.

For commercial fishing on pelagic stocks, the Pacific Islands Fisheries Science Center presented data indicating that fishing in the PRI has a minimal impact on tuna stocks. The catch in the PRI accounts for less than 1% of the maximum sustainable yield for skipjack and yellowfin tuna and only 3.5% of the MSY for bigeye tuna. More importantly, these tuna stocks are neither overfished nor subject to overfishing.

Last week, the SSC discussed at its meeting a NOAA PIFSC report on the Economic Contributions of U.S. Commercial Fisheries in American Samoa that documents hundreds of millions of dollars and thousands of jobs that are directly or indirectly supported by the industry. The committee found no scientific evidence to support additional fishing rules in the proposed sanctuary and cautioned against causing unintended negative impacts on the U.S. fleet and the underserved com-

munity of American Samoa.

The existing council decision-making process under the Magnuson-Stevens Act allows for shared stewardship with state and territorial partners, as well as domestic and international partnerships in managing highly migratory pelagic fish species such as Pacific tunas. The council has been in the forefront of engaging with indigenous and traditional communities in American Samoa, Hawai'i, Guam, and the CNMI to utilize traditional knowledge in modern management practices.

The council has long implemented enduring and comprehensive fishing regulations in the Western Pacific, such as a region-wide total prohibition on 'destructive' gears in 1986 to protect habitat, vulnerable species and biodiversity.

The council will discuss and may take action on annual catch limits for the American Samoa bottomfish fishery for 2024-2026, a revision to the Hawai'i Fishery Ecosystem Plan regarding the essential fish habitat designation for gray jobfish (uku), and bigeye tuna catch limits and allocation for the U.S. Pacific Territories.

The council meets next week virtually Dec. 12-13, 2023, with host sites at 1164 Bishop St., Ste. 1400, Honolulu, HI; Tedi of Samoa Bldg. Ste. 208B, Fagatogo Village, American Samoa; Cliff Pointe, 304 W. O'Brien Dr., Hagatna, Guam; BRI Bldg. Ste. 205, Kopa Di Oru St., Garapan, Saipan, CNMI. Instructions on connecting to the web conference, agendas and briefing documents are posted at [www.wpcouncil.org/event/197th-council-meeting](http://www.wpcouncil.org/event/197th-council-meeting). (PR)



US AIR FORCE

Airmen from the 734th Air Mobility Squadron inspect nets for a deficiency during a rodeo at Andersen Air Force Base, Guam, Nov. 14, 2023.



## EMBRACING THE SPIRIT:

# Father Mode's vision for unity and fellowship in the Pacific

In a significant stride for international collaboration and spiritual guidance, Father Daniel Mode, the chaplain of the Coast Guard, recently visited the U.S. Coast Guard Team Guam from Dec. 2-6, 2023. This visit follows the historic first International Coast Guard chaplain exchange, during which Father Mode spent time with the Philippine Coast Guard.

## A life in service

Father Mode's journey with the military is deeply rooted and extensive. As the son of a Navy officer, he has lived a life intertwined with military service, spanning over 57 years with 23 Permanent Change of Station moves. His familial ties to the military extend beyond his father, with his brother serving as a submariner. Remarkably, a Mode has served in the Navy for over 75 years.

## Spiritual guidance and leadership

Acknowledged as the service's spiritual leader, Father Mode has been instrumental in the upliftment of the U.S. Coast Guard's spiritual and moral framework. His global life experience and understanding of military life have been pivotal in catering to the diverse needs of service members. Father Mode's recent involvement in giving the Catholic Mass on Naval Base Guam for the first Sunday of Advent draws a poignant analogy to his role—much like standing the watch in military service, Advent symbolizes a period of vigilant waiting and preparation, reflective of the dedication and readiness inherent in military life.

## Empowering the



Father Daniel Mode, chaplain of the U.S. Coast Guard, recognizes Petty Officer 2nd Class AJ Olbris for excellence at all hands with Team Guam in Guam on Dec. 5, 2023.

## Chaplain Corps

Under Father Mode's leadership, the Coast Guard Chaplains have substantially increased by more than 25 percent since June 2022. This enhancement includes the integration of reserve and auxiliary chaplains, who deployed for extended periods. Emphasizing the importance of this expansion, Father Mode remarked, "Increasing the number of chaplains 'at the point of care' ensures our presence from our waterfronts to ships conducting Operation Vigilant Sentry and Arctic deployments, and notably, the appointment of Chaplain Richard Min, our first Chaplain in Guam."

## A notable reduction in suicides

2023 has seen a heartening decrease of more than 50

percent in suicides within the Coast Guard from 2022. This improvement is a testament to the expanded services and programs, particularly the enhanced resiliency programs supported by the Coast Guard Foundation. Father Mode reflects on this topic, "While we're trending in the right direction, we must remember that one death is too many. We must look out for our shipmates, always."

## Future collaborations and recognition

As Father Daniel Mode concludes his inspiring visit to U.S. Coast Guard Team Guam, he leaves behind a vision brimming with potential and hope. His reflections on the visit extend far beyond a routine check-in; they delve into the spiritual richness and potential for profound

fellowship in the Pacific, particularly in the spiritually vibrant communities of Micronesia and Oceania.

The Pacific region, known for its breathtaking landscapes and diverse cultures, is also a realm where spirituality weaves through the daily lives of its inhabitants. In these remote areas, where the vast ocean meets the sky, the spiritual beliefs and practices of the communities are as deep and enduring as the sea itself. This profound spiritual depth offers a unique opportunity for shared fellowship and understanding, particularly for the chaplains who serve alongside the Coast

Guard in these regions.

Father Mode envisions a future where this spiritual connection is recognized, celebrated, and integrated into the fabric of the Coast Guard's operations. The presence of chaplains in these remote areas is more than a mere extension of spiritual services; it's an opportunity to build bridges of understanding, participate in the rich tapestry of local beliefs, and provide support that resonates deeply with the spiritual nature of these communities.

This vision ties seamlessly into the long and storied history of Navy chaplains who have served with distinction

for 248 years. Nov. 28, 2023, marked not just another year but a celebration of nearly two and a half centuries of unwavering spiritual guidance, resilience, and support provided by these dedicated individuals. It's a testament to their enduring commitment to the well-being of service members, a commitment that has seen them serve the Navy, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard with equal enthusiasm.

## Background on Father Daniel L. Mode

Extensive education and diverse military assignments mark Capt. Daniel L. Mode's journey to becoming the 12th Chaplain of the Coast Guard. His academic background includes degrees in Philosophy, History, and Theology, with his thesis on Navy Chaplain Father Vincent Capodanno later evolving into a celebrated biography, "The Grunt Padre." His pastoral assignments spanned from associate pastorships to school vice-principal and parish pastor roles. His first assignment with the U.S. Coast Guard was at the Academy.

Father Mode's military service commenced in 1988, encompassing various roles across the Navy and Marine Corps, including deployments supporting Operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom. His commendable service has earned him numerous awards, including the Legion of Merit and Bronze Star. (USCG)



CHIEF WARRANT OFFICER SARA MUIR

Father Daniel Mode, chaplain of the U.S. Coast Guard, visits with members of U.S. Coast Guard Station Apra Harbor in Guam on Dec. 4, 2023.



CHIEF WARRANT OFFICER SARA MUIR

Father Daniel Mode, chaplain of the U.S. Coast Guard, chats with Lt. Ray Cerrato, commanding officer of USCGC *Oliver Henry* (WPC 1140) of U.S. Coast Guard Forces Micronesia/Sector Guam and Base Guam in Guam on Dec. 6, 2023.



# Opinion

Hafa Adai!

## Saipan Tribune

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### EDITORIAL

## White House must come to the table on aid package

**T**he White House must get serious about reaching a deal with Republicans over aid to Ukraine and border security. It's time for President Joe Biden to end the bluster and work toward compromise.

On Wednesday, Senate Republicans blocked the administration's \$111 billion package on a procedural vote that required support from 60 senators for the legislation to advance. The measure bundles financial assistance to Ukraine, Israel and Taiwan with increased funding for U.S. border security.

At issue are additional measures intended to stem the flow of illegal migrants over the southern border. Republicans argue the current bill fails to include policy changes they believe will reduce the number of border crossings.

"Republicans think they get everything they want, without any bipartisan compromise," Biden said. "That's not the answer."

Yet Republicans have indeed compromised. Clearly the GOP is willing to give in on Ukraine—many Republicans in both the House and Senate have expressed hesitation about further funding that nation's war with Russia—as long as the president and Democrats do the same on border security.

Given the scope of the immigration disaster the Biden administration has created, this is hardly unreasonable. The GOP priorities include measures to tighten the much-abused asylum screening process and more efficient detention policies that would discourage catch-and-release tactics.

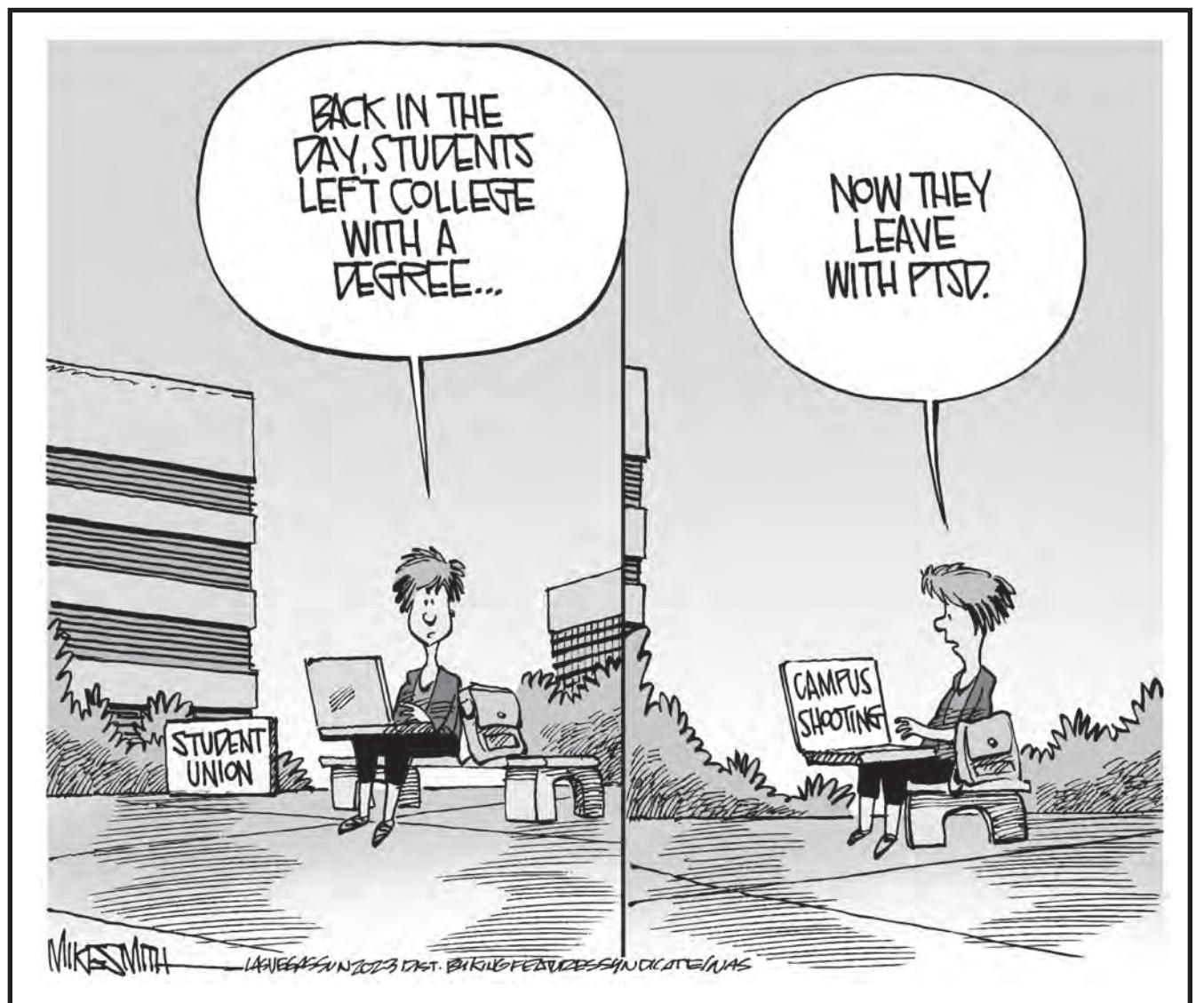
"As we've said for weeks, legislation that doesn't include policy changes to secure our borders will not pass the Senate," Minority Leader Mitch McConnell reiterated this week. He added, "Apparently some of our colleagues would rather let Russia trample a sovereign nation in Europe than do what it takes to enforce America's own sovereign borders. They're convinced open borders are worth jeopardizing security around the world."

Despite the rhetoric, the conditions for a deal are in place. Both sides agree on aid to Israel. Both sides control one legislative chamber. Republicans in the House are more likely to stomach the legislation if it contains the stronger border security measures that their Senate counterparts are demanding. Even the president has conceded the problems at the border, saying, "We need to fix the broken border system. It is broken." Senate Republicans have signaled a willingness to negotiate.

If "Republicans are going to move, and we're going to move, then let's sit down and talk," Sen. Chris Murphy, D-Conn., told *The Wall Street Journal*.

While the GOP typically gets blamed for deadlocks, the real issue is whether the White House will stand up to vocal progressive agitators who favor open borders, a policy wholly rejected by the vast majority of the electorate.

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## No, Virginia, your Christmas tree is not a climate crime

**I**f there's one climate-change solution everybody seems to agree on, it's that trees are good. Even Donald Trump, who has called climate change a Chinese hoax, has proposed planting a trillion trees.

So it might seem that the holiday tradition of chopping down one of these precious planet-savers and dragging it into your living room to festoon with lights and ornaments, only to toss it on the curb a few weeks later, would be bad for the climate. But in fact, you may be doing the planet a favor.

For one thing, Christmas-tree farming is generally a sustainable business. Trees grow for many years before harvesting and are replaced by one or more seedlings when they're finally cut down. Just 30 million of the 350 million or so trees on farms actually get chopped down every season, according to The Nature Conservancy, an environmental advocacy nonprofit. While they grow, the trees absorb carbon from the atmosphere, doing their part to eat the emissions humans wantonly pump into the air by burning fossil fuels, raising cows and the like.

Of course, cutting trees down, digging up the soil to plant new ones and hauling the harvest to your local Elk's Club or Walmart parking lot for sale to the public does generate carbon emissions. But this pollution is nothing compared with what's involved in producing artificial trees. These are typically hard to recycle, and they are also typically shipped all the way from China to that Walmart. According to one estimate, a 6-foot-tall artificial tree (on the short side for a McMansion) produces 88 pounds of CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent, compared with less than 8 pounds for a real tree of the same size.

To maximize the environmental benefits of the real tree, you will need to make sure it's both sourced and recycled responsibly. Cutting trees out of old-growth forests and then just leaving them on the ground to rot raises the carbon impact.

You could save yourself all of this agonizing by buying a live tree that you can replant once you're done making it look ridiculous. Of course, then you've given yourself a chore. But remember, if you still insist on getting an artificial tree, you'll have to use it for 12 Christmases to make up the difference in emissions. The risk is that you'd get sick of looking at it long before then; the average household uses such a tree for 10 years before chucking it.

Some people don't have any other choice, though. Maybe

**By MARK GONGLOFF**  
Bloomberg Opinion

Mark Gongloff is a Bloomberg Opinion editor and columnist covering climate change. He previously worked for *Fortune.com*, the *Huffington Post* and the *Wall Street Journal*.



they have allergies or odor sensitivities that make real trees, live or dead, unbearable. This brings us to the deep, dark secret of this column: It doesn't really matter what you do. You could just stare at the corner where a tree should be, or you could buy 100 artificial trees and set them all on fire on New Year's Day. Whatever CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent you produce is not even fit to be a rounding error compared with the carbon emissions of, oh, let's say Walmart, which emitted 14 million tons of CO<sub>2</sub> last year. <sup>(1)</sup>

As I've noted before, the idea of a personal "carbon footprint" was invented by BP Plc, the oil behemoth formerly known as British Petroleum. It's a clever marketing ploy that makes you, dear reader, feel guilty about your own emissions, which in turn makes you less likely to complain about those of, say, BP (340 million tons last year). <sup>(2)</sup>

The conundrum is that many individual consumer choices together can shift demand so much that it starts to make a real difference. And the richer you are, the bigger your carbon impact and the greater your influence.

But the important thing to know is that you can buy an artificial tree and eat cheeseburgers and drive a gas-burning car if you need to and still help fight global warming. Make whatever lifestyle changes you can afford, sure. But the impact of talking to your friends, loved ones and enemies about climate, advocating for action and voting for politicians who want to make a difference will last longer than any Christmas decoration.

(1) I'm picking on Walmart only because I've mentioned it twice already in the column, and it's more fun to do things in threes. The company has actually been reducing its emissions steadily in recent years and has a goal to cut them by 65% from 2015 levels by 2030.

(2) Unlike Walmart's numbers, BP's numbers include "Scope 3" emissions, which include those generated by the fuel it produces and sells.



**EDITORIAL POLICY**

Letters to the editor must include the NAME, VILLAGE ADDRESS, and CONTACT NUMBER of the contributor. Letters that do not have these information will immediately be trashed. Contributions consisting of 500 words or less have more chances of getting published. The *Saipan Tribune* reserves the right to publish a contribution or not; the right to edit submissions for length, accuracy, and clarity; and the right to publish and distribute contributions in print, electronic, or other media formats. Submissions may be sent via snail mail to the 2nd Floor, JP Center, Beach Road, Garapan, Saipan, 96950; fax (670) 235-3740; e-mail to editor@saipantribune.com; or through our website at www.saipantribune.com.

## It is true. There are people who don't want to work anymore

**T**he new Dollar General store in my rural Illinois hometown couldn't open for the longest time because it couldn't find workers. Apples rotted on the ground at Arends Orchard nearby because the 50-year proprietor couldn't find help—for the first time in his long history of providing apples and cider to our area.

How many times have you heard this lament from small business owners? "People just don't want to work anymore."

Labor force participation as a percentage of possible workers has been trending down in recent decades. One factor out of several possible explanations for workforce reduction? Among the able-bodied in my childhood post-World War II, work was required to eat. Today, it isn't. Many people, young and not so, have apparently developed lifestyles that support them adequately—to their minds anyway—with no, or minimal, work "on the books," that is, in a regular job.

I am fascinated, for example, by a family that lives on the edge of my hometown. For at least two decades, the nine members of this "family" have been existing largely to play video games, it seems, and laze around the two-bedroom ranch home that is deteriorating around them, not so slowly. One of the three men in this family has fathered three children by three mothers, some of whom live in the home.

(This account is based on an interview with the father of the 50-ish "patriarch" of the family. My source lets his son and clan live there rent-free, though his patience has reached its end. The source lives elsewhere. Two social worker friends in the area tell me this type of family is far from unique in rural Illinois.)

How does the family support itself? Two of the women are certified nursing assistants and work a few hours a month each at nursing

homes. Two of the men are skilled at digital technology. Infrequently, they work off the books, repairing computers. The two seemingly able-bodied men are also on disability, for mental health and physical reasons, respectively.

Then, there is the panoply of nonprofit and government support programs. Food is largely supplied with visits to more than one area food pantry each month—"pantry hopping" is the term among social workers—and by the Link card, which debits the government for food for the low-income.

There are also the federal and Illinois income tax credit programs, which provide tax reductions and in Illinois cash tax refunds for individuals whose work income is below a certain level. There are also utility bill, rental assistance and other support programs for the low-income.

I am not opposed to any one of these programs, nor to helping people in need. And I know many single parents struggle mightily to make a decent life for themselves and their kids, even with these programs.

I simply point out that strategies can be—and are—developed by some to create an alternative lifestyle that avoids participating in conventional work.

There are indeed "costs" involved in working, which are obvious, but not often thought about, at least not by me. For example, work hours take away from opportunities to play video games, as well as pursue other avocations. Work may also be stressful, hard, unrewarding, boring and exhausting. Not working avoids these costs.

The result of the work or no-work conundrum may be, rationally for some, to opt for no work. This doesn't seem fair to those who work and indirectly support those who don't.

According to the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, our nation's labor

**By JIM NOWLAN**

Chicago Tribune

*Jim Nowlan is a former Illinois legislator, state agency director, professor and newspaper columnist. He is co-author, with Melissa Mouritsen and Kent Redfield, of a new edition of Illinois Politics: A Citizen's Guide to Power, Politics, and Government to be released by University of Illinois Press in early 2024.*



force participation rate (the number working divided by the number of working-age adults) declined steadily from 67% in 2000 to 63% this year. By my back-of-the-envelope reckoning, each percentage point of difference represents about 2 million potential workers who weren't participating. Thus, if we were back at year 2000 levels of labor force participation, there would be roughly 8 million more Americans working today than are doing so.

What to do? Options range from kicking people off the dole to making work more attractive, with higher pay and better workplace environment. Another option that I think bears more discussion: Admit that adults have a right to an alternative, de minimis work lifestyle, yet calibrate their government and other benefits to the value they add to society. Little value added equals few benefits. For example, at one time, volunteering in one's community was required in return for food stamps.

People who don't want to work should not live off the sweat of our brows.

## There's too much hatred in politics. Arnold Schwarzenegger shows the value of an upbeat attitude

**S**ACRAMENTO, Calif.—Former Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger returned to Sacramento recently and reminded us of a beneficial trait he possesses that is sorely lacking in today's polarized politics: an upbeat attitude.

There's currently too much bellowing, blaming and belligerence—and hatred—to make democracy work productively the way the republic's founders intended.

True, it's easier to be upbeat when you're super rich and a global celebrity—one who has soared to the top in three competitive ventures: bodybuilding, movies and politics.

Conversely, being upbeat and an eternal optimist throughout life surely is a major reason why Schwarzenegger, 76, rose to the top of the heap, accumulating stardom, wealth and power.

It made him an extraordinarily interesting moderate Republican governor for seven years—not always successful, but constantly trying and bold.

I was reminded of Schwarzenegger's value to the political world when he came back to the state capital to celebrate the 20th anniversary of his swearing-in as governor on Nov. 17, 2003, having ousted Democrat Gray Davis in a unique recall election.

Right here I'll admit to a pro-Schwarzenegger bias regarding one matter: his positive, practical relationship with the news media.

That doesn't mean he was treated gently in the press. Coverage was often hard-hitting. The Times exposed allegations that he groped women right before the recall election. As governor, Schwarzenegger was criticized in print for his fiscal policies, calling Democratic legislators "girlie men" and reducing the manslaughter sentence of a Democratic ally's son.

But he chose the Sacramento Press Club to host one of two inaugural anniversary celebrations. He did an hourlong Q-and-A session during a sold-out luncheon. A later evening reception attended by hundreds was organized by alumni of the Schwarzenegger administration.

Asking the Press Club to host a luncheon for him enabled the organization to sell tickets and raise several thousand dollars for its scholarship fund to help college journalism students.

That was Schwarzenegger's pattern as governor. Each January, he would speak to a sold-out Press Club luncheon, pitching his legislative agenda and raising thousands of dollars for journalism scholarships.

But not his successors: Democrats Jerry Brown and Gavin Newsom.

Brown appeared only once in eight years. Newsom never has, although he seemingly jumps at every opportunity to appear on national TV. It wouldn't matter except that he's denying journalism students thousands of dollars in scholarship money.

"I would not be sitting here today if it weren't for the press," Schwarzenegger replied when veteran political writer Carla Marinucci, the luncheon Q&A moderator, asked him how he viewed his news coverage as governor.

What he meant was that whether it was in bodybuilding, movie acting or being governor, if journalists had not informed the public about him, he would not have become a household name. He'd have been like the proverbial giant tree falling in the isolated forest.

"I had a great relationship with the press after I became governor," he said. "I'm a happy camper."

Unlike so many politicians, particularly MAGA Republicans, Schwarzenegger did not habitually accuse reporters of prejudicial coverage or spreading "fake news"—even when they took his hide off.

That's one example of his upbeat, sunny personality, a trait that applied to his governing generally.

"It was the best seven years of my life without any doubt," he told the Press Club.

But his "anything's possible" belief led to both good and bad decisions.

"I loved—I mean loved—challenges," he told the luncheon crowd. "And I love when people would say, 'This can't be done.... It will be impossible....'"

"The more they said those things the more excited I got because I love danger. I hate a boring life, which I call 'existing.' I love living fully with the dangers and the failures and the successes."

Schwarzenegger wouldn't listen to people he called "naysayers."

OK, that can be admirable but it's a dangerous two-edged sword. The naysayers were usually experienced political and government hands trying to give the novice practical advice.

Sage advice such as don't call a special election to push a package of wide-ranging so-called reforms that had weak support. The governor did anyway in 2005 and was uncharacteristically humiliated when voters rejected his measures in a landslide.

"I got the message," Schwarzenegger said afterward.

The governor got it so well that the next year he promoted \$37 billion in infrastructure bonds that voters readily approved.

**By GEORGE SKELTON**

Los Angeles Times



Schwarzenegger's persistence gained voter approval of a vital political reform: ending the Legislature's gerrymandering of legislative and congressional districts.

But the optimist often over-promised and couldn't deliver, as when he vowed to "tear up the credit cards," "end the crazy deficit spending" and "live within our means." It was a pleasant dream.

Schwarzenegger was self-confident enough that he didn't bow to his party's base, unlike most politicians. Hollywood's action hero famously spoke the truth to a Republican state convention in 2007, admonishing that "we are dying at the box office. We are not filling the seats."

He warned that the GOP could win in California only by "expanding into the center, not falling back upon ourselves into a smaller and smaller corner."

The GOP regarded Schwarzenegger as a heretic naysayer and retreated into a much smaller corner.

Now "we need new blood" in political leadership, he told the Press Club. "New energy, a new way of looking at [problems]." He cited Democrat John F. Kennedy and Republican Ronald Reagan as the "fresh blood" of their eras.

But Schwarzenegger insisted he wasn't criticizing President Joe Biden.

As for former President Donald Trump: "Look, I don't want to comment now on every single stupid thing that he says [or I'll] be sitting here for the next eight days."

Schwarzenegger has never left any doubt that he'd run for president if he could. The native Austrian is barred because he wasn't born in the United States.

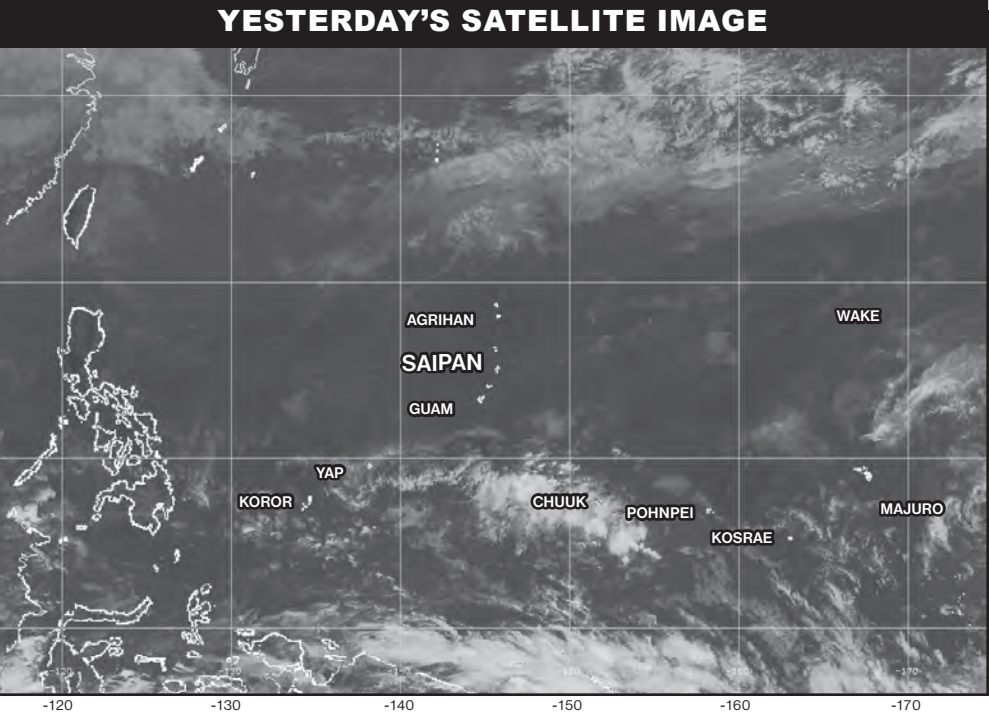
"I'm not going to complain about it," he said. "Because every single thing that I've accomplished in my life is because of America."

American politics could use more of Schwarzenegger's upbeat swagger.



# The Weather

5-DAY FORECAST FOR SAIPAN AND TINIAN									
TODAY		TUESDAY		WEDNESDAY		THURSDAY		FRIDAY	
Partly cloudy with isolated showers. northeast winds 10 to 15 mph, becoming east 15 to 20 mph.		Partly cloudy with isolated showers. northeast winds 10 to 15 mph, becoming east 15 to 20 mph.		Partly cloudy with a 20 percent chance of showers.		Partly cloudy with a 20 percent chance of showers.		Partly cloudy with a 20 percent chance of showers.	
86	77°	86	77°	86	77°	86	77°	86	77°



**PICTURE TIME: 6:35 AM, SUNDAY, DECEMBER 10, 2023**

Western North Pacific between equator and 25N from 130E to 180.

Satellite imagery shows isolated showers continue to cross the region this morning, some of which have been briefly heavy at times. Seas are holding near 7 feet for our coastal waters, with a water temperature of 84 degrees.

Satellite image and accompanying information are provided by the National Weather Service. For an updated weather forecast, visit the National Weather Service Guam homepage: <https://www.weather.gov/gum/>

MICRONESIA			▲ ▼ °F
Guam and Rota	Partly Cloudy	86° / 79°	
Palau	Partly Cloudy	85° / 78°	
Yap	Partly Cloudy	86° / 79°	
Chuuk	Thunderstorms	86° / 80°	
Pohnpei	Partly Cloudy	85° / 78°	
Kosrae	Thunderstorms	85° / 78°	
Majuro	Partly Cloudy	85° / 80°	

DAY	SUNRISE	SUNSET
Today	6:32 AM	5:47 PM
Tuesday	6:33 AM	5:47 PM
Wednesday	6:33 AM	5:48 PM
Thursday	6:34 AM	5:48 PM
Friday	6:34 AM	5:48 PM

DAY	MOONRISE	MOONSET	MOONRISE
Today	4:34 AM	4:08 PM	-
Tuesday	5:33 AM	4:59 PM	-
Wednesday	6:35 AM	5:56 PM	-
Thursday	7:38 AM	6:58 PM	-
Friday	8:39 AM	8:03 PM	-

AROUND THE GLOBE			▲ ▼ °F
Auckland	Mostly Sunny	72° / 59°	
Beijing	Sunny	45° / 21°	
Hong Kong	Partly Cloudy	73° / 63°	
Honolulu	Showers	82° / 73°	
London	Sunny	43° / 34°	
Los Angeles	Sunny	73° / 53°	
Manila	Partly Cloudy	90° / 77°	
Melbourne	Rain	66° / 55°	
Miami	Mostly Sunny	78° / 71°	
New York	Showers	53° / 36°	
Osaka	Sunny	52° / 39°	
Paris	Partly Cloudy	39° / 28°	
Busan	Mostly Sunny	48° / 36°	
Rome	Mostly Sunny	55° / 39°	
Salem	Partly Cloudy	70° / 54°	
San Francisco	Partly Cloudy	59° / 48°	
Seoul	Mostly Sunny	45° / 32°	
Tokyo	Mostly Sunny	50° / 39°	
Washington, DC	Partly Cloudy	54° / 34°	

TIDES: SAIPAN HARBOR TODAY			FEET
12:20 AM	Low Tide	-0.28	
7:23 AM	High Tide	1.57	
12:22 PM	Low Tide	1.01	
5:34 PM	High Tide	1.71	

## FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF OCTOBER 30, 2023

DEPARTURES				ARRIVALS			
SAIPAN-GUAM (GUM)				GUAM (GUM)-SAIPAN			
UA076	9:50AM	10:30AM	Daily	UA174	8:00AM	8:45AM	Daily
SAIPAN- NARITA (NRT)				NARITA (NRT)-SAIPAN			
UA824	7:05AM	9:45AM	1, 3, 5	UA825	9:25PM	2:00AM+1	2, 4, 7
GUAM-MANILA (MNL)				MANILA (MNL)-GUAM			
PR 111	5:55AM	7:55AM	Daily	UA189	00:40AM	6:30AM	3, 6
UA193	7:50PM	11:50PM	2, 5 via Palau	PR110	10:05PM	3:55AM+1	Daily
UA183	7:55PM	9:50PM	Daily	UA192	10:40PM	6:30AM+1	2, 5 via Palau
				UA184	10:55PM	4:45AM+1	1, 3, 4, 6, 7
SAIPAN-MANILA (MNL)				MANILA (MNL)-SAIPAN			
7C3403/2305	4:40AM	10:20PM	Daily	UA189/174	00:40AM	8:45AM+1	3, 6 via Guam
UA076/183	9:50AM	9:50PM	Daily via Guam	UA192/174	10:40PM	8:45AM+1	2, 5 via Palau, Guam
UA076/193	9:50AM	11:50PM	2, 5 via Guam, Palau	UA184/174	10:55PM	8:45AM+1	1, 3, 4, 6, 7 via Guam
				7C2306/3406	11:15PM	3:30PM+1	Daily
SAIPAN-INCHEON (ICN)				INCHEON (ICN)-SAIPAN			
TW308	2:15AM	6:10AM	Daily	7C3406	10:10AM	3:30PM	Daily
7C3403	4:40AM	8:35AM	Daily	TW307	7:45PM	1:15AM+1	Daily
7C3405	4:35PM	8:25PM	Daily	7C3404	10:15PM	3:35AM+1	Daily

LEGEND: Days: Monday (1), Tuesday (2), Wednesday (3), Thursday (4), Friday (5), Saturday (6) and Sunday (7); UA United Airlines; PR, Philippine Airlines; TW, T'Way Air; OZ, Asiana Airlines; 7C, Jeju Air; BX, Air Busan • ETD: Estimated Time of Departure; ETA: Estimated Time of Arrival. *(The Saipan Tribune is not responsible for any changes in the schedule.)*

## STAR MARIANAS AIR, INC.

### FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF OCTOBER 30, 2023

SAIPAN TO ROTA					
FLIGHT #	FROM	TO	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
1301	SAIPAN	ROTA	08:30	09:00	Oct 21-31, 2023
1302	SAIPAN	ROTA	10:30	11:00	Daily
1303	SAIPAN	ROTA	15:30	16:00	Daily

ROTA TO SAIPAN					
FLIGHT #	FROM	TO	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
3101	ROTA	SAIPAN	9:30	10:00	Oct 21-31, 2023
3102	ROTA	SAIPAN	11:30	12:00	Saturday & Sunday
3103	ROTA	SAIPAN	13:30	14:00	Monday To Friday
3104	ROTA	SAIPAN	16:30	17:00	Daily

ROTA TO GUAM					
FLIGHT #	FROM	TO	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
3401	ROTA	GUAM	11:30	12:00	Monday To Friday

GUAM TO ROTA					
FLIGHT #	FROM	TO	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
4301	GUAM	ROTA	12:30	13:00	Monday To Friday

SAIPAN TO TINIAN					
FLIGHT #	FROM	TO	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
1201	SAIPAN	TINIAN	7:30	7:45	Daily
1202	SAIPAN	TINIAN	8:00	8:15	Daily
1203	SAIPAN	TINIAN	9:00	9:15	Daily
1204	SAIPAN	TINIAN	10:00	10:15	Daily
1206	SAIPAN	TINIAN	15:00	15:15	Daily
1207	SAIPAN	TINIAN	16:00	16:15	Daily
1208	SAIPAN	TINIAN	17:00	17:15	Daily

TINIAN TO SAIPAN					
FLIGHT #	FROM	TO	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
2101	TINIAN	SAIPAN	8:00	8:15	Daily
2102	TINIAN	SAIPAN	8:30	8:45	Daily
2103	TINIAN	SAIPAN	9:30	9:45	Daily
2104	TINIAN	SAIPAN	10:30	10:45	Daily
2106	TINIAN	SAIPAN	15:30	15:45	Daily
2107	TINIAN	SAIPAN	16:30	16:45	Daily
2108	TINIAN	SAIPAN	17:30	17:45	Daily

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# Business

## Guam Business Magazine names Executive of the Year nominees

**BARRIGADA, Guam**—*Guam Business Magazine* is pleased to announce the nominees for the 2023 *Guam Business Magazine* Executive of the Year.

The nominees are:

■ David A. Alcorn, president and chief operating officer, GFS Group;

■ Nenita C. Baldovino, owner of Rambies Corp., which does business as Rambies Fast Food and Rambies Catering;

■ William H. Best, vice president and general manager, Smithbridge Guam;

■ Cesar C. Cabot, attorney and founding partner, Cabot Matanona LLP; and owner of CW Holdings LLC, which does business as the Medical Arts Center;

■ John Day, president and chief operating officer, Pacific Data Systems; and

■ Matthew S. Hunter, vice president, chief operating officer, and chief financial officer, Dylan Mechanical Construction Services Inc.

The winner will be revealed at the Jan. 13, 2024 Executive of the Year Gala at the Hyatt Re-



Alcorn



Baldovino



Best



Cabot



Day



Hunter

gency Guam, together with the release of the January-February 2024 issue of *Guam Business Magazine*, which will feature the awardee on the cover.

Since 1983, the title of Executive of the Year has been awarded to recognize executives who have made outstanding contributions to the business communities of Micronesia, have raised the bar in their fields and are considerably involved in the community.

Past Executive of the Year recipients include Robert H. Jones of Triple J Enterprises Inc. (1983); John M. Borlas of IT&E Overseas Inc. (1984); Philip J. Flores of BankPacific (1985); Doris Flores Brooks of the Office of Public Accountability (1986); Mark V. Pangilinan of M.V. Pangilinan Enterprises Inc. (1987); Allen A. Pickens of Tax-Aide (1988); the late T. Roy

Sullivan of Jones & Guerrero Co. (1989); Kurt S. Moylan of Moylan's Insurance (1990); the late Akira "Mike" Baba of Baba Corp. (1991); Paul M. Calvo of Calvo Enterprises Inc. (1992); Antoinette D. Sanford of Sanford Technology Group (1993); the late Kenneth T. Jones of Jones & Guerrero Co. (1994); the late Edward M. Calvo of Calvo Enterprises Inc. (1995); L. Carl Peterson of Money Resources Inc. (1996); William R. Thompson (1997) of Atkins Kroll Inc.; the late John K. Lee of First Hawaiian Bank (1998); the late Henry L. Schnabel of Calvo's Insurance Underwriters (1999); Marian Aldan-Pierce of DFS Saipan (2000); Manfred H. Pieper of Voyages Indigenus Tourism Australia (2001); Thomas G. Ahillen of Asia Pacific Solutions LLC (2002); Juan T. Guerrero of Herman's

Modern Bakery Inc. (2003); Joseph M. Crisostomo of Cars Plus LLC, Cycles Plus and Payless Car Rental (2004); Joseph "Jerry" Kramer of Pacific International Inc. (2004); David M. Sablan of Century Group of Companies (2005); the late Alfred C. Ysrael of Tanota Partners (2006); Lee P. Webber of MDA Guam (2007); Laura-Lynn V. Dacanay of First Hawaiian Bank (2008); Jerry Cho Yee Tan of Tan Holdings Inc. (2009); Lourdes A. "Lou" Leon Guerrero of Bank of Guam (2010); Jay R. Shedd of IT&E (2011); Jerrold C. Johnson of Hawaiian Rock Products (2012); George Chiu of Tan Holdings (2013); Norman T. Tenorio of Joeten Enterprises Inc., Pacifica Insurance Underwriters Inc., Tropical Instant Press Inc., Saipan Shipping Co., Saipan

Stevadore and Advance Carrier (2014); Jeffrey B. Jones of Triple J Enterprises Inc. (2015); Jose C. "Joe" Ayuyu of McDonald's of Guam and Saipan, RJ Corp. and RJ Guam LLC (2016); Leonard K. Kaa Sr. of Black Con-

struction Corp. (2017); Bernadette N. Valencia of Matson Navigation Inc. (2018); AnneMarie T. Muna, of AM Insurance (2019); Edward G. Untalan of First Hawaiian Bank (2021); and Thomas G. Shimizu (2022). (PR)

## Europe reaches deal on world's first comprehensive AI rules

**LONDON (AP)**—European Union negotiators clinched a deal Friday on the world's first comprehensive artificial intelligence rules, paving the way for legal oversight of AI technology that has promised to transform everyday life and spurred warnings of existential dangers to humanity.

Negotiators from the European Parliament and the bloc's 27 member countries overcame big differences on controversial points including generative AI and police use of face recognition surveillance to sign a tentative political agreement for the Artificial Intelligence Act.

"Deal!" tweeted European Commissioner Thierry Breton just before midnight. "The EU becomes the very first continent to set clear rules for the use of AI."

The result came after marathon closed-door talks this week, with the initial session lasting 22 hours before a second round kicked off Friday morning.

Officials were under the gun to secure a political victory for the flagship legislation. Civil society groups, however, gave it a cool reception as they wait for technical details that will need to be ironed out in the coming weeks. They said the deal didn't go far enough in protecting people from harm caused by AI systems.

"Today's political deal marks the beginning of important and necessary technical work on crucial details of the AI Act, which are still missing," said Daniel Friedlaender, head of the European office of the Computer and Communications Industry Association, a tech industry lobby group.

The EU took an early lead in the global race to draw up AI guardrails when it unveiled the first draft of its rulebook in 2021. The recent boom in generative AI, however, sent European officials scrambling to update a proposal poised to serve as a blueprint for the world.

The European Parliament will still need to vote on the act early next year, but with the deal done that's a formal-

ity, Brando Benifei, an Italian lawmaker co-leading the body's negotiating efforts, told The Associated Press late Friday.

"It's very very good," he said by text message after being asked if it included everything he wanted. "Obviously we had to accept some compromises but overall very good." The eventual law wouldn't fully take effect until 2025 at the earliest, and threatens stiff financial penalties for violations of up to 35 million euros (\$38 million) or 7% of a company's global turnover.

Generative AI systems like OpenAI's ChatGPT have exploded into the world's consciousness, dazzling users with the ability to produce human-like text, photos and songs but raising fears about the risks the rapidly developing technology poses to jobs, privacy and copyright protection and even human life itself.

Now, the U.S., U.K., China and global coalitions like the Group of 7 major democracies have jumped in with their own proposals to regulate AI, though they're still catching up to Europe.

Strong and comprehensive rules from the EU "can set a powerful example for many governments considering regulation," said Anu Bradford, a Columbia Law School professor who's an expert on EU law and digital regulation. Other countries "may not copy every provision but will likely emulate many aspects of it."

AI companies subject to the EU's rules will also likely extend some of those obligations outside the continent, she said. "After all, it is not efficient to re-train separate models for different markets," she said.

The AI Act was originally designed to mitigate the dangers from specific AI functions based on their level of risk, from low to unacceptable. But lawmakers pushed to expand it to foundation models, the advanced systems that underpin general purpose AI services like ChatGPT and Google's Bard chatbot.

## Biden dings Trump on infrastructure; showcases \$8.2B for 10 major rail projects

**LAS VEGAS (AP)**—President Joe Biden went to Las Vegas on Friday to say he's "putting high-speed rail on the fast track," and he used the moment to blast Donald Trump—his predecessor and likely 2024 challenger—as a do-nothing politician.

"Trump just talks the talk. We walk the walk," Biden said at a hall for unionized carpenters. "He likes to say America is a failing nation. Frankly, he doesn't know what the hell he's talking about. I see shovels in the ground, cranes in the sky. People hard at work rebuilding America together."

The president showcased \$8.2 billion in new federal funding for 10 major passenger rail projects across the country. He also emphasized the fundamental differences between Trump and himself, a sign that his policy speeches are taking an ever greater political bent with the election now roughly 11 months away.

The Democrat said Trump "failed" to deliver on his promises to invest in U.S. infrastructure. Biden countered that his rail funding could help to connect Las Vegas to Los Angeles via high-speed trains before L.A. hosts the summer Olympics in 2028, slashing travel times, helping the environment and creating jobs.

Biden hopes that investment through federal and state partnership programs will help to

boost prospects for the long-discussed project, which supporters say could revitalize travel in the American West but critics argue is too costly.

The 218-mile (350.8-kilometer) train route linking Las Vegas and Rancho Cucamonga, California, about 40 miles (65 kilometers) east of downtown Los Angeles, may one day serve more than 11 million passengers annually.

Another electric rail line getting funding has been billed as the nation's first high-speed route and is eventually planned to traverse California's Central Valley and extend to San Francisco and on to Los Angeles, with trains reaching up to 220 mph (354 kph).

The funding highlighted by the president won't be nearly enough to cover the full costs of either project, but signals the Biden administration's commitment to spurring train travel in a nation that has long celebrated the spirit of fast cars and open highways.

Other train projects getting funding include upgrades to heavily traveled corridors in Virginia and North Carolina, with the eventual goal of linking Richmond and Raleigh by rail. Funding will also go to improvements to a rail bridge over the Potomac River to bolster passenger service in Washington and will cover train corridor upgrades in western Pennsylvania and

Maine, while expanding capacity at Chicago's Union Station, one of the nation's busiest rail hubs.

The announcement aside, Biden also used his visit to Las Vegas to address this week's shooting at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, that killed three people and wounded a fourth. Biden again called for Congress to act on an assault weapons ban.

"I'm not going to rest until we do all we can to prevent more families and more communities from being torn apart by gun violence," Biden said.

The president is to end the day in Los Angeles at a fundraiser featuring entertainment industry luminaries.

Friday's trip was planned before the shooting and Biden's focus on train service is little surprise for a president who is a big passenger rail advocate. Biden has championed several major federal spending investments in passenger rail travel, including last month when he announced \$16 billion in federal investments for rail travel along the busy Northeast Corridor.

During his 36 years as a senator, Biden traveled back and forth from his home in Delaware to Washington daily and says he has logged more than 1 million miles on Amtrak.

Making high-speed rail a

reality in California won't be easy, though, since its first-in-the-U.S. project has long been plagued by extended deadlines and cost overruns.

The plan has been funded by some prior federal grants, as well as a bond fund approved by voters in 2008, and revenue from the state's cap-and-trade climate program. But that adds up to a total far below the project's estimated costs, now at more than \$100 billion.

California Republicans have long been critical of the project, but even some state Democrats have become more vocal in their skepticism.

Construction and land acquisition is underway in the Central Valley. But Brian Kelly, the project's CEO, has long said a fresh infusion of federal cash is an important part of advancing the project. The Biden administration had previously signaled support for the project when it restored nearly \$1 billion in federal money that the Trump administration tried to revoke.

Asked about rising costs and growing delays on the high-speed line, Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg acknowledged in a call with reporters, "They are facing a lot of the challenges that come with being the very first at anything."

"For all of these projects, we would not be funding them if we did not believe they can deliver," he said.



# Nation

## Tax charges in Hunter Biden case rarely filed

» But could have deep political reverberations

**WASHINGTON (AP)**—Hunter Biden has been hit with new criminal charges in California accusing him of scheming to avoid paying his taxes while spending lavishly on everything from luxury hotels to escorts to exotic cars.

The president's son is also facing separate firearm charges in Delaware, raising the possibility he could be headed toward trial in two different cases as his father, President Joe Biden, campaigns for re-election.

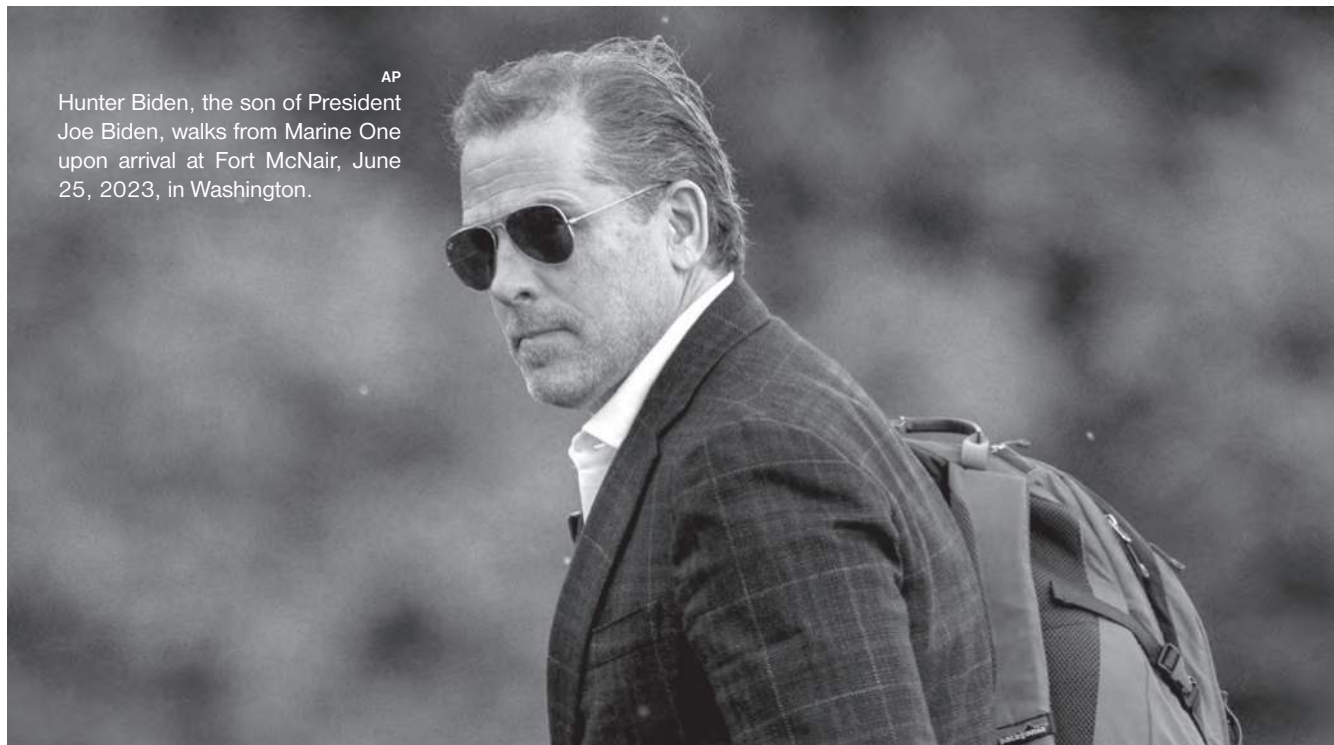
Some of the allegations in the 56-page indictment largely track what's been previously aired about Hunter Biden's life when he was in the throes of drug addiction, but the sordid new details of his personal spending and alleged scheming to avoid tax payments could add to the political complications for his father. Joe Biden looks likely to face a close presidential race where Donald Trump is the leading contender for the GOP nomination.

Defense attorney Abbe Lowell, for his part, said the taxes have since been paid and argued Hunter Biden is being targeted because of his father's political position.

Here's a look at the situation:

### How common are cases like this?

Criminal tax cases generally are very rare, said Beverly Moran, a tax law expert at Vanderbilt University. The average American has almost as good a chance of winning the lottery



AP  
Hunter Biden, the son of President Joe Biden, walks from Marine One upon arrival at Fort McNair, June 25, 2023, in Washington.

as being criminally prosecuted for tax fraud, she said, based on 2021 data from the Internal Revenue Service.

"Most people who commit tax fraud go through their entire lives without anything happening. They don't audited, they don't get caught, they don't get prosecuted," she said. "But if they get prosecuted, they get convicted."

Of the 665 cases that were referred for prosecution in 2021, about 90% resulted in a conviction, the IRS data shows.

Many tax cases, though, are resolved before charges are filed, said Laurie Levenson, a former federal prosecutor and professor at Loyola Law School.

They can be hashed out in civil court, with fines and penalties, rather than with criminal charges. Trump ally Roger Stone, for example, faced a

lawsuit from the Justice Department over nearly \$2 million in income tax in 2021. It was settled the following year.

Tax evasion can lead to jail time, however. Actor Wesley Snipes spent three years in prison after being convicted in 2008 of three misdemeanor counts of failing to file tax returns in a case where he owed about \$7 million in back taxes.

Cases against celebrities and other high-profile people can also generate attention that helps convince other people to file their taxes on time, Moran said.

### What are the possible political implications?

Hunter Biden has never held political office, but the charges against him are increasingly looking like a thorny political issue for his father.

House Republicans are ex-

pected to hold a vote next week on formalizing an impeachment inquiry into President Biden, whom Republicans have sought to link to his son's business dealings. No evidence has so far emerged to prove the president in his current or previous office abused his role or accepted bribes. However, questions have arisen about the ethics surrounding the international business dealings of Hunter and the president's brother, James Biden.

The new criminal charges against Hunter Biden are focused on his taxes and don't mention his father.

Still, Republicans have already seized on the salacious details of Hunter's conduct, his murky business dealings and alleged criminal misdeeds to try to harm his father's political standing, and the indict-

ment pushes more detail into the conversation.

It's taken on more urgency as Trump's legal woes play out over his efforts to overturn the 2020 presidential election and Republicans aim to undercut Biden's ability to defeat his one-time rival once again. And there are indications that the strategy is working.

An October poll by The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research found that 35% of U.S. adults believe Joe Biden personally has done something illegal concerning the business dealings of his son. An additional 33% say the president acted unethically but did not violate the law. Just 30% say Joe Biden did nothing wrong.

### What are the charges?

Hunter Biden was indicted on three felonies and six misdemeanors, including filing a false return and tax evasion felonies, as well as misdemeanor failure to file and failure to pay. Hunter Biden, 53, could receive a maximum of 17 years in prison.

The charges are centered on at least \$1.4 million in taxes Hunter Biden owed between 2016 and 2019. During that time, he schemed to avoid taxes while spending money on "drugs, escorts and girlfriends, luxury hotels and rental properties, exotic cars, clothing ... in short, everything but his taxes," prosecutors wrote.

Joe Biden's tenure as vice president ended in January 2017.

## Abortion delays grew more common in US since *Roe v. Wade* overturned

By LAURA UNGAR  
AP SCIENCE WRITER

A woman whose fetus was unlikely to survive called more than a dozen abortion clinics before finding one that would take her, only to be put on weekslong waiting lists. A teen waited seven weeks for an abortion because it took her mother that long to get her an appointment. Others seeking the procedure faced waits because they struggled to travel hundreds of miles for care.

Such obstacles have grown more common since *Roe v. Wade* was overturned in June 2022, doctors and researchers say, causing delays that can lead to abortions that are more complex, costly and in some cases riskier—especially as pregnancies get further along.

About half of U.S. states now have laws that ban or restrict access to abortion. Because of that, many clinics don't offer the procedure, which has increased demand for appointments at the remaining providers.

At various points since *Roe*, waits in several states stretched for two or three weeks, and some clinics had no available appointments, according to results of a periodic survey spearheaded by Middlebury College economics professor Caitlin Myers and recently provided

to The Associated Press. Doctors and researchers say even as wait times have lessened, people still encounter other challenges, like planning and paying for travel, taking time off work and finding child care.

"All of those things can contribute to delays, and then it kind of becomes like this vicious circle," said Dr. Daniel Grossman, an OB-GYN at the University of California, San Francisco, who co-authored a research report earlier this year that compiled anecdotes from health care providers after *Roe* was overturned.

People may miss the window for medication abortions, which are not generally offered past 10 to 11 weeks gestation. A dwindling number of clinics provide abortions as people move through the second trimester, which begins at 13 or 14 weeks. Costs for the procedure change, too, from up to \$800 in the first trimester to \$2,000 or more in the second trimester.

"While abortion is safe at all points in pregnancy," with an overall complication rate of 2%, it "does get more complicated as the pregnancy continues," said Dr. Colleen McNicholas, chief medical officer at Planned Parenthood of the St. Louis Region.

## 6 dead, nearly 2 dozen injured after severe storms tear through central Tennessee

**NASHVILLE, Tenn. (AP)**—Severe storms that tore through central Tennessee killed six people Saturday and sent about two dozen to the hospital as homes and businesses were damaged in multiple cities.

Three people, including a child, were killed after an apparent tornado struck Montgomery County north of Nashville near the Kentucky state line, county officials said in a news release. And the Nashville Emergency Operation Center said in a post on a social media account that three people were killed by severe storms in a neighborhood just north of downtown. Meanwhile, another 23 people were treated for injuries at hospitals in Montgomery County.

Photos posted by the Clarksville fire department on social media showed damaged houses

with debris strewn in the lawns, a tractor trailer flipped on its side on a highway and insulation ripped out of building walls.

"This is devastating news and our hearts are broken for the families of those who lost loved ones," said Clarksville Mayor Joe Pitts in a statement. "The city stands ready to help them in their time of grief."

The Metropolitan Nashville Police Department identified the victims killed north of downtown as Joseph Dalton, 37; Floridema Gabriel Perez, 31, and her son, Anthony Elmer Mendez, 2. Dalton was inside his mobile home when the storm tossed it on top of Perez's residence. Two other children, one in each home, were taken to a hospital with non-life threatening injuries, the department said in a statement.

No further information about the other three deaths was immediately available Saturday night.

The Montgomery County Sheriff's Office said in a statement that a tornado touched down around 2 p.m. A shelter was set up at a local high school.

Residents were asked to stay at home while first responders evaluated the situation. In a briefing shared on social media, Pitts said there was extensive damage.

"So please, if you need help, call 911 and help will be on the way immediately. But if you can, please stay home. Do not get out on the roads. Our first responders need time and space," he said.

Tennessee Gov. Bill Lee said he and his wife, Maria, were praying for all Tennes-

seans who had been affected by the storms.

"We mourn the lives lost and ask that everyone continue to follow guidance from local and state officials," Lee said in a statement.

Shanika Washington said that as soon as she heard the storm sirens going off in her Clarksville neighborhood, she took her children, ages 5 and 10, to a windowless bathroom in the basement of her townhouse.

"The lights were flickering, so I knew it was somewhere close in the vicinity," she said. "I just kept praying to God as it was going on. It was very terrifying and scary."

During their 20 harrowing minutes in the bathroom, Washington hovered over her children as a protective shield.



World

WORLD BRIEFS

**Israel presses on with Gaza offensive after US veto derails Security Council efforts to halt war**  
**DEIR AL-BALAH, Gaza Strip** (AP)—Israel's military pushed ahead with its punishing air and ground offensive in Gaza on Saturday, bolstered by a U.S. veto derailing U.N. Security Council efforts to end the war and word that an emergency sale of \$106 million worth of tank ammunition had been approved by Washington. Unable to leave Gaza, a territory 25 miles (40 kilometers) long by about 7 miles (11 kilometers) wide, more than 2 million Palestinians faced more bombardment Saturday, even in areas that Israel had described as safe zones. The sale of nearly 14,000 rounds of tank ammunition was announced a day after the U.S. vetoed a U.N. Security Council resolution demanding an immediate cease-fire in Gaza, a measure that had wide international support. The U.S. said Secretary of State Antony Blinken determined that "an emergency exists" in the national interest requiring the immediate sale, meaning it bypasses congressional review. Such a determination is rare. A day after Israel

confirmed it was rounding up Palestinian men for interrogation, some men released Saturday told The Associated Press they had been treated badly, providing the first accounts of the conditions from the detentions. Osama Oula said Israeli troops had pulled men out of a building in the Shujaiyah area of Gaza City, ordering them to the street in their underwear. Oula said Israeli forces bound him and others with zip ties, beat them for several days and gave them little water to drink.

**With Putin's reelection all but assured, Russia's opposition still vows to undermine his image**  
**TALLINN, Estonia** (AP)—Behind bars in penal colonies or in self-exile abroad, Russian opposition figures vow they will still put up a fight against President Vladimir Putin as he seeks yet another term in office in an election in March. Although they believe Putin will be declared the winner no matter how voters cast their ballots, they say they hope to undermine the widespread public support he enjoys, turn popular opinion against the devastating war he unleashed on Ukraine, and show those who oppose it already that they are not alone.

"No one but us will step into this battle for the hearts and the minds of our fellow citizens. So we need to do it and win," imprisoned Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny said in an online statement relayed from behind bars. Putin, 71, announced Friday that he will run for president again, to pile another six years onto his two dozen in power. He could even run again in 2030. The vote is scheduled for March 15-17, with his victory all but assured. The vast majority of opposition figures are either imprisoned or have fled the country, almost all independent news outlets have been blocked, and any criticism has been muted by a slew of repressive laws adopted over the last decade. "This is, basically, a guarantee that (the Kremlin) can declare any result whatsoever," said Nikolay Petrov, visiting researcher at the German Institute for International and Security Affairs, in an interview with The Associated Press. Some activists agree there is no point in trying to influence the election's outcome.

**US, PH condemn Chinese coast guard's water cannon blasts on fisheries vessels**  
**MANILA, Philippines** (AP)—




The Philippines and its treaty ally, the United States, separately condemned a high-seas assault Saturday by the Chinese coast guard together with suspected militia ships that repeatedly blasted water cannons to block three Philippine fisheries vessels from a disputed shoal in the South China Sea. The noon-time assault by Chinese ships off the Scarborough Shoal, one of the most aggressive this year, caused "significant damage" to the communication and navigation equipment of one of the three Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources ships, Filipino officials said. They said without elaborating that suspected militia vessels accompanying Chinese coast guard ships used a long-range acoustic device that could impair hearing, causing "severe temporary discomfort and incapacitation to some Filipino crew." It's the latest flare-up of the long-seething territorial disputes in the South China Sea, a flashpoint in Asia that has put the U.S. and China on a collision course. China claims virtually the entire strategic waterway, but the Philippines, Vietnam, Malaysia, Brunei and Taiwan have also pressed their separate claims. Territorial standoffs between China and the Philippines over a

number of disputed offshore areas, including the Scarborough and the Second Thomas shoals, have been particularly heated this year. The U.S. has warned that it's obligated to defend the Philippines, its longtime treaty ally, if Filipino forces, aircraft or ships come under an armed attack, including in the South China Sea.

**US sanctions officials from Afghanistan to China on declaration of human rights anniversary**  
**WASHINGTON** (AP)—Ahead of the 75th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the U.S. on Friday imposed sanctions on 20 people, from Afghanistan to China to Haiti to Iran, accused of violating human rights in their respective nations. Included in the sanctions are two Afghanistan government ministers accused of repressing women and girls, by restricting access to secondary education; two Iranian intelligence officers who the Treasury says plot violence against Iranian regime opponents beyond the nation's borders and two Chinese officials accused of torturing Uyghur ethnic minorities in the Xinjiang region

of China. "Our commitment to upholding and defending human rights is sacrosanct," said Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen. "Abuses of human rights and fundamental freedoms—wherever they occur in the world—strike at the heart of our shared humanity and our collective conscience," she said.

She said the agency's human rights sanctions "underscore the seriousness of our commitment to promoting accountability for human rights abuse and safeguarding the U.S. financial system from those who commit these egregious acts." The sanctions block access to U.S. property and bank accounts and prevent the targeted people and companies from doing business with Americans. Republican lawmakers say the sanctions against Chinese officials do not go far enough. Rep. Mike Gallagher (R-WI), Chairman of the House Select Committee on the Chinese Communist Party and Sen. Marco Rubio (R-FL) said in a statement, "while we welcome this news, the Biden Administration has dragged its feet to implement sanctions under the Uyghur Human Rights Policy Act for far too long."



DEATH AND FUNERAL ANNOUNCEMENT

IN LOVING MEMORY OF

† Jose "Joe" Cepeda

October 18, 1964 – December 2, 2023

In his new life, he now joins his:

Mother: †Maria Agulto Cepeda "Mama Iya"

Niece: †Jamielyn Maria Castro Cepeda

Grandniece: †Ka'Lea Faith Cepeda

His memories will forever live in the hearts of his:

Wife: Norma Sotto Cepeda

Sons: Jose Sotto Cepeda Jr. "Junjun"

Mark Sotto Cepeda

Christian Sotto Cepeda

Daughter: Karen Sotto Cepeda

Brothers: James Robert Cepeda/ Angelyn Castro-Cepeda and Family

Albert Ray Cepeda/ Denita Sablan Naputi and Family

Sisters: Roslyn Cepeda Palacios/ Paul Palacios and Family

He will be remembered by numerous uncles, aunts, cousins, nephews, nieces, godchildren, and friends.

On Wednesday, December 13, 2023, Viewing and Last Respect will be held at Mount Carmel Cathedral at 8:00 am. Mass of Christian Burial will be celebrated at 10:00 am by her family and friends at the Chalan Kanoa Cemetery where he will be laid for his final resting.

Thank you and Si Yu'us Ma'ase.

Norma Sotto Cepeda and Family



# Health & Wellness

## The rainbow of urine colors: What's typical, what's not

Regular urine color varies but usually ranges from clear to pale yellow. The exact hue depends on how much water you drink. Fluids dilute the yellow pigments in urine. So the more you drink, the clearer your urine looks. When you drink less, the yellow color becomes stronger.

Some foods and medications can change the color of urine. For example, foods like beets, blackberries and fava beans can turn urine pink or red. Some medications also can give urine vivid tones, such as orange or greenish-blue.

An unusual urine color also can be a sign of a health problem, however. For instance, some urinary tract infections can turn urine milky white. Kidney stones, some cancers and other diseases sometimes make urine look red due to blood.

Here are some unusual urine colors, along with things that can cause them.

### Red or pink urine

Red urine isn't always a sign of a serious health problem. Red or pink urine can be caused by:

■ **Blood:** Health problems that can cause blood in the urine include an enlarged prostate, tumors that aren't cancer, and kidney stones and cysts. Vigorous exercise also can cause blood in the urine. Blood in the urine is common

in urinary tract infections and with kidney stones. Those problems often cause pain. Painless bleeding might be a sign of a more serious problem, such as cancer.

■ **Foods:** Beets, blackberries and rhubarb can turn urine red or pink.

■ **Medicines:** Red or pink urine is possible if you take medications for tuberculosis, urinary tract pain or constipation.

### Orange urine

Orange urine can be caused by:

■ **Medicines:** Constipation medicines can turn urine orange, as can medicine that lessens swelling and irritation, and some chemotherapy medicines for cancer.

■ **Vitamins:** Some vitamins, such as A and B-12, can turn urine orange or yellow-orange.

■ **Health problems:** Orange urine can be a sign of a problem with the liver or bile duct, mainly if you also have light-colored stools. Dehydration also can make your urine look orange.

### Blue or green urine

Blue or green urine can be caused by:

■ **Dyes:** Some brightly colored food dyes can cause green urine. Dyes used for some kidney and bladder tests can turn urine blue.

■ **Medicines:** Some medicines for depression, ulcers



DREAMSTIME/TNS

In this photo taken April 14, 2017, in New York City, a sign indicates that the bathroom is gender neutral.

## MAYO CLINIC Q AND A

### Health benefits of volunteering

**DEAR MAYO CLINIC:** My neighbor recently retired, and I've been trying to convince her to volunteer at the library with me. She's not swayed by my stories of feeling good from helping others. Can you share some other benefits of dedicating her time and energy to a cause?

**ANSWER:** Thank you for volunteering in your community and for trying to persuade your neighbor to join you. Volunteers make an immeasurable difference in people's lives.

The act of volunteering also benefits a person's health as well. Research has shown that volunteering offers significant health benefits, especially for older adults. Here are the top three you can share with your neighbor:

#### 1. Improves physical and mental health.

Volunteer activities keep people moving and thinking at the same time. Research has found that volunteering among adults who are 60 and older provided benefits to physical and mental health. Volunteers report better physical health than nonvolunteers. Volunteering leads to lower rates of depression and anxiety, especially for people 65 and older.

It reduces stress and increases positive, relaxed feelings by releasing dopamine in the brain. By spending time in

service to others, volunteers report feeling a sense of meaning and appreciation, both given and received, which can have a stress-reducing effect.

Reduced stress further decreases the risk of some physical and mental health problems, including heart disease, stroke, depression, anxiety and general illness. In addition, people who volunteer have lower mortality rates than those who do not, even when controlling for age, sex and physical health.

#### 2. Provides a sense of purpose and teaches valuable skills.

The work that volunteers provide is essential to everyday activities, giving volunteers a sense of purpose, especially when giving their time and talents in the areas they find meaningful. Older volunteers experience greater increases in life satisfaction and self-esteem.

In addition to volunteering at libraries, schools and food pantries, many people volunteer at local hospitals. They serve as greeters and waiting room attendants, provide patient room information and directions, and help transport patients and patient items.

Other volunteers use their craft skills to make prayer shawls, blankets, sweaters and hats that are typically given to newborn babies and patients with cancer. Other services

and acid reflux can turn urine greenish-blue. Medications for pain, arthritis and sleep also can turn urine green.

■ **Health problems:** A rare disease called familial benign hypercalcemia can cause children to have blue urine. Urinary tract infections caused by a certain bacteria can cause green urine.

### Dark brown or cola-colored urine

Brown urine can be caused by:

■ **Foods:** Eating lots of fava beans, rhubarb or aloe can cause dark brown urine.

■ **Medicines:** Some medicines can darken urine, including those used to treat and prevent malaria, constipation, high cholesterol and seizures. Some antibiotics and muscle relaxers also can darken urine.

■ **Health problems:** Some liver and kidney disorders and urinary tract infections can turn urine dark brown. So can bleeding inside the body, called a hemorrhage. A group

of illnesses mainly affecting the skin or the nervous system, called porphyria, also can cause brown urine.

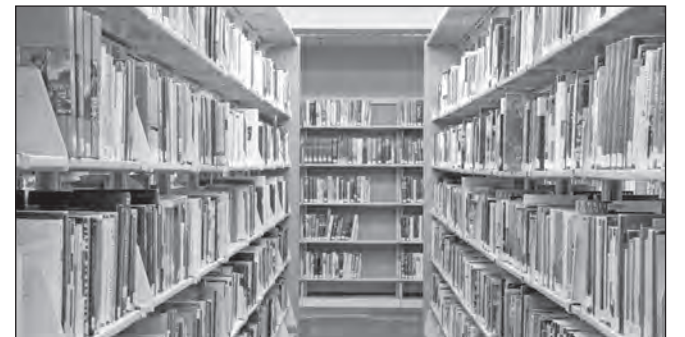
■ **Extreme exercise:** A muscle injury from extreme training can cause tea- or cola-colored urine. The injury can lead to kidney damage.

### Cloudy or murky urine

Urinary tract infections and kidney stones can cause urine to look cloudy or murky.

Keep in mind that colors can look slightly different to different people. For instance, what looks red to you might look orange to someone else. Talk with your healthcare team if you have concerns and in particular if you have painful urination or dark orange urine, which can be a sign that your liver isn't working correctly.

*Ashley Pountney is a physician assistant in Urology in Austin and Albert Lea, Minnesota. (Mayo Clinic News Network)*



DREAMSTIME/TNS

Research has shown that volunteering offers significant health benefits, especially for older adults.

volunteers provide include working in the hospital gift shop, performing clerical duties for staff or offering pet therapy to patients.

#### 3. Nurture new and existing relationships.

Volunteering increases social interaction and helps build a support system based on common interests. One of the best ways to make new friends and strengthen existing relationships is to participate in a shared activity. Social circles can shrink in retirement so building or expanding networks can be especially important during this phase of your neighbor's life.

In many cases, volunteers have diverse backgrounds, which helps expand their social network and allows them to practice social skills with others.

As you may have found from your own experience, people are motivated to volunteer for several reasons. They may be exploring careers, sharpening skills, meeting new people, serving their commu-

nities or staying active during retirement. Yet all volunteers share a common desire to improve the health and welfare of people in their communities.

The good news is that your neighbor doesn't need to be a philanthropist or senator to enhance or create change in the community. Offer other suggestions if she's not interested in volunteering at the library. Likely, there are a wide variety of volunteer opportunities in your community, whether she's interested in youth, environmental, health, religious or community causes. Encourage her to connect with local nonprofit and cultural organizations, schools, faith communities or hospitals for options.

As you have discovered, volunteering makes an immeasurable difference in people's lives. If your neighbor is open to it, her time and talents can help others and benefit her health at the same time. —*Angela Thoreson, licensed independent clinical social worker, Psychiatry & Psychology, Mayo Clinic Health System, Austin, Minnesota*

### Healthy Living

## 5 and 5 for breakfast

*A light, healthy breakfast can keep you from overeating at lunch.*

### 5 grams of protein

Such as 1/2 cup of fat-free milk; leads to a slow increase in blood sugar; does not stimulate hunger later

### 5 grams of fiber

Such as piece of fruit, a slice of whole-grain bread; makes stomach feel full longer

Source: WebMD, TNS Photo Service





# Life & Style

## Taylor Swift's Eras Tour is the first tour to gross over \$1 billion, Pollstar says

LOS ANGELES (AP)—Taylor Swift's Eras Tour is the first tour to cross the billion-dollar mark, according to Pollstar's 2023 year-end charts.

Not only was Swift's landmark Eras Tour the No. 1 tour both worldwide and in North America, but she also brought in a whopping \$1.04 billion with 4.35 million tickets sold across 60 tour dates, the concert trade publication found.

Pollstar data is pulled from box office reports, venue capacity estimates, historical Pollstar venue ticket sales data, and other undefined research, collected from Nov. 17, 2022 to Nov. 15, 2023.

Representatives for the publication did not immediately clarify if they adjusted past tour data to match 2023 inflation in naming Swift the first to break the billion-dollar threshold.

Pollstar also found that Swift brought in approximately \$200 million in merch sales and her blockbuster film adaptation of the tour, "Taylor Swift: The Eras



Taylor Swift performs at the Monumental stadium during her Eras Tour concert in Buenos Aires, Argentina, Thursday, Nov. 9, 2023. AP

Tour," has reportedly earned approximately \$250 million in sales, making it the highest-grossing concert film of all time.

According to their estimates, Pollstar predicts a big 2024 for Swift as well. The magazine projects the Eras Tour will once again reach \$1 billion within their eligibility window, meaning Swift is likely to bring in over \$2 billion over the span of the tour.

Worldwide, Swift's tour was followed by Beyoncé in second, Bruce Springsteen & The E Street Band in third, Coldplay in fourth, Harry Styles in fifth, and Morgan Wallen, Ed Sheeran, Pink, The Weeknd and Drake.

In North America, there was a similar top 10: Swift, followed by Beyoncé, Morgan Wallen, Drake, P!nk, Bruce Springsteen & The E Street Band, Ed Sheeran, George Strait, Karol G, and RBD.

Beyond the Swift of it all, 2023 was a landmark year for concert sales: worldwide, the top 100 tours of the year saw a 46% jump from last year, bringing in \$9.17 billion compared to 2022's \$6.28 billion.

In North America, that number jumped from \$4.77 billion last year to \$6.63 billion.

Earlier this week, Swift was named Time Magazine's Person of the Year. Last month, Apple Music named her its artist of the year; Spotify revealed she was 2023's most-streamed artist globally, raking in more than 26.1 billion streams since Jan. 1 and beating Bad Bunny's three-year record.

Consider 2023 a year of incredible pop music dominance—(Taylor's Version.)

## Ryan O'Neal, star of 'Love Story,' dies at 82

LOS ANGELES (AP)—Ryan O'Neal, the heartthrob actor who went from a TV soap opera to an Oscar-nominated role in "Love Story" and delivered a wry performance opposite his charismatic 9-year-old daughter Tatum in "Paper Moon," died Friday, his son said.



O'Neal

"My dad passed away peacefully today, with his loving team by his side supporting him and loving him as

he would us," Patrick O'Neal, a Los Angeles sportscaster, posted on Instagram.

No cause of death was given. Ryan O'Neal was diagnosed with prostate cancer in 2012, a decade after he was first diagnosed with chronic leukemia. He was 82.

"My father, Ryan O'Neal, has always been my hero," Patrick O'Neal wrote, adding, "He is a Hollywood legend. Full stop."

"He meant the world to me. I loved him very much and know he loved me too," Tatum O'Neal told People magazine in a statement. "I'll miss him forever, and I feel very lucky that we ended on such good terms."

Ryan O'Neal was among the biggest movie stars in the world in the 1970s, working across genres with many of the era's most celebrated directors including Peter Bogdanovich on "Paper Moon" and "What's Up, Doc?" and

Stanley Kubrick on "Barry Lyndon." He often used his boyish, blond good looks to play men who hid shadowy or sinister backgrounds behind their clean-cut images.

O'Neal maintained a steady television acting career into his 70s in the 2010s, appearing for stints on "Bones" and "Desperate Housewives," but his longtime relationship with Farrah Fawcett and his tumultuous family life kept him in news.

Twice divorced, O'Neal was romantically involved

with Fawcett for nearly 30 years, and they had a son, Redmond, born in 1985. The couple split in 1997, but reunited a few years later. He remained by Fawcett's side as she battled cancer, which killed her in 2009 at age 62.

With his first wife, Joanna Moore, O'Neal fathered actors Griffin O'Neal and Tatum O'Neal, his co-star in the 1973 movie "Paper Moon," for which she won an Oscar for best supporting actress. He had son Patrick with his second wife, Leigh Taylor-Young.

## Boyfriend seems content with romance's status quo

**DEAR ABBY:** I'm 22 and have been dating a 55-year-old man I'll call "Gerald" for a year now. Because of the difference in our ages, I have been trying to find things for us to do together so our relationship can be more than just sex. I really love Gerald and want it to work, but how do I make it work when he won't meet me halfway?

We really don't have any reasons to fight except for his jealous ex-wife of 11 years. How do I try to keep this relationship? Everything I suggest Gerald turns down. Is it because deep down he doesn't want to be in this relationship? Or that he doesn't think it will go far?

CHALLENGED IN PENNSYLVANIA

**DEAR CHALLENGED:** I am not a mind reader, but it appears your "silver fox" is happy with the relationship just as it is. That's the reason he shoots down your suggestions for ways to expand it beyond the bedroom. You can't make a relationship work all by yourself. Gerald has to be willing to participate. If his reaction to everything you suggest is opposition, it may be time to move on and find someone with whom you have more in common.

■■■

**DEAR ABBY:** I was invited to my nephew's wedding out of state and accepted the invitation. It's a four-hour drive. My son wasn't interested in attending, and my boyfriend wasn't sure he could attend due to work travel. The mother of the bride informed me that she had decided to "put" an elderly relative in my room

with me, claiming they were now out of rooms. (She's known to be miserly and dishonest.)

There was no offer to share costs, and it was assumed that I'd transport, dress and monitor the relative. I ended up declining the invitation, and I regret not being at my nephew's wedding. My boyfriend was able to attend but, by then, I couldn't make an appropriate room arrangement. Thoughts?

SKIPPED IT IN THE EAST

**DEAR SKIPPED IT:** Just this: Because you felt the mother of the bride should have asked your permission rather than "tell" you her plan was for you to babysit the relative, you were within your rights to refuse to do anything that made you uncomfortable.

■■■

**DEAR ABBY:** I am an active, retired man who has a serious problem with my slightly younger sister. She's a loud and aggressive back-seat driver. When she rides in my car, she feels compelled to loudly tell me what lane to drive in and to freak out over how close I am to the car in front and a variety of other issues she imagines.

I am a competent and safe driver, but her loud exclamations are not only annoying, they distract me at times, which I'm afraid could lead to an accident. "Get in the left lane!" she shouts, but she doesn't see the cars behind us that I see in my mirror.

She knows how much this bothers me but seems not to care.

## DEAR ABBY

By Abigail Van Buren  
UNIVERSAL PRESS SYNDICATE

Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Contact Dear Abby at [www.DearAbby.com](http://www.DearAbby.com) or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.



I have lost my temper at her for doing it. Any advice on how to get her to refrain from these outbursts while I'm driving?

ANGRY BIG BROTHER

**DEAR BROTHER:** Your sister may not be able to control herself, which is why she does this. Because you find the back-seat driving not only annoying but potentially dangerous, stop letting her ride with you and your problem will be solved.

■■■

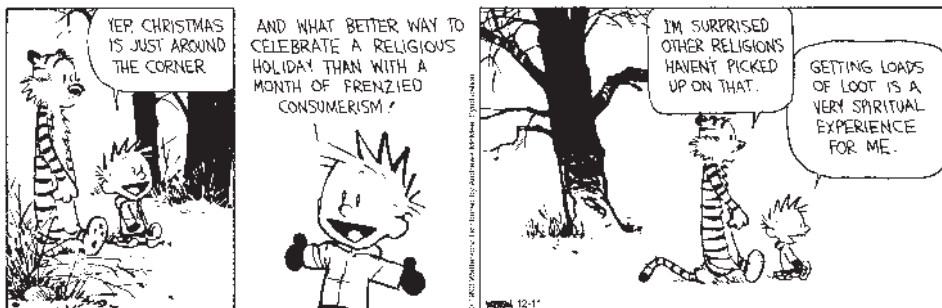
To receive a collection of Abby's most memorable – and most frequently requested – poems and essays, send your name and mailing address, plus check or money order for \$8 (U.S. funds) to: Dear Abby – Keepers Booklet, P.O. Box 447, Mount Morris, IL 61054-0447. (Shipping and handling are included in the price.)



# Pastimes

## Calvin and Hobbes

By Bill Waterson



## Garfield®

By Jim Davis



## Adam@home

By Bryan Basset



## The Duplex

By Glenn McCoy



## CROSSWORD

By Eugene Sheffer

**ACROSS**

1 "Levi-tating" singer  
4 Spiral shell  
9 Monk's title  
12 Curved letter  
13 Blazing  
14 Fine, to NASA  
15 "We'll play by the rules, okay?"  
17 MLB stat  
18 UFO crew  
19 Pulpit delivery  
21 Perplex  
24 Chan-teuse Edith  
25 Actress MacGraw  
26 Giverny summer  
28 Drink slowly  
31 Vocal quality  
33 Blue  
35 Author Uris  
36 Got wind of

**DOWN**

1 Dict. info  
2 "Suits" network  
3 "Do — say!"  
4 Rook  
5 Balances  
6 "Empire" actress  
7 Like fresh apples  
8 Below, in contracts  
9 Sign at a rural vegetable stand  
10 Sci-fi prefix  
11 Related  
16 Ump  
20 Actor Julia

**21** Tub session  
**22** Skin soother  
**23** March Madness elite group  
**27** Snack on  
**29** Chimney buildup  
**30** Con-cludes  
**32** Part of Q.E.D.  
**34** "The News-room" actor  
**37** Pub orders  
**39** "Non-sense!"  
**42** Entrap  
**44** Fed. property manager  
**45** Com-poser Porter  
**46** La Scala solo  
**50** Inmate  
**51** Corp. boss  
**52** AAA job  
**53** NBC weekend show

**Solution time: 21 mins.**

P	I	T	I	T	G	I	G	A	R
I	W	O	N	I	A	O	R	C	O
X	I	I	F	A	C	E	M	A	S
I	L	L	O	R	O	N	O		
E	L	S	A	S	I	M	A	P	S
M	I	N	S	K	I	T	A	L	I
A	N	D	E	A	N	W	A	I	
G	N	A	T	F	P	A	S	I	A
			S	I	L	S	E	R	E
F	A	C	E	P	L	A	N	T	G
A	B	A	C	I	C	U	E	A	N
R	E	P	O	T	E	T	S	L	A

Last Friday's Answer

**CELEBRITIES BORN ON THIS DAY:** Mo'Nique, 56; Gary Dourdan, 57; Jermaine Jackson, 69; Bess Armstrong, 70.

**Happy Birthday:** Choose to take responsibility for your happiness, and get your facts straight before you share your thoughts. Pay attention to what others expect or require before committing to something time-consuming or costly. Don't let change dictate your next move. Do what makes you happy, and don't let anyone make you feel guilty about following your heart or your dreams. Your numbers are 8, 14, 19, 24, 32, 36, 45.

**ARIES (March 21-April 19):** Show discipline when spending and handling contractual or medical issues. Knowing and doing what's best for you and following through will make a difference. Be open to suggestions, learning and accepting last-minute changes. You will reach your goal. ★★★★★

**TAURUS (April 20-May 20):** Take charge, and don't stop until you are happy with the results. When in doubt, ask an expert and learn as you go. Your success depends on how astute you are and your ability to admit when you are wrong or come up short. ★★★

**GEMINI (May 21-June 20):** Too many choices will confuse you. The balance between work and home needs fine-tuning if you intend to keep the peace and get things done on time. Know when to say no to demands, and you'll ward off an emotional setback. Address responsibilities first. ★★★

**CANCER (June 21-July 22):** Pay attention; you'll see what's brewing before it becomes a problem. Too much too fast will lead to a costly miscalculation. A steady pace forward coupled with surrounding yourself with experts will put your mind at ease and encourage hands-on action. ★★★

**LEO (July 23-Aug. 22):** Head in a direction that excites you instead of letting someone dictate your next move. An energetic approach to something that brings you joy will encourage you to develop skills that lead to a higher income or worthwhile connections. Put your energy where it counts. ★★★★★

**VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22):** Be careful when you're dealing with others. Emotions and anger will surface if you make changes that threaten someone's security. Consider what's important to loved ones, and compensate to ensure no one gets left behind. A considerate change with an explanation will pay off. ★★

**LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22):** Be realistic when dealing with changes at home or in your family dynamics. Getting along will help you gain perspective regarding your purpose and effectiveness. Don't overstep your boundaries or fall short on your contributions. Don't make excuses; do your part and finish what you start. ★★★

**SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21):** Look for an opportunity, and you will discover the lifestyle that suits your needs. Put more thought into how you can exploit what you enjoy doing most. Don't wait for someone to step in and take over. Personal gain, growth

and self-improvement are favored. ★★★★★

**SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21):** Do what you can. Refuse to bend to limits set by others. Do what feels right and what's best for you. An energetic approach to your responsibilities will influence how others think of you and your contributions. ★★★

**CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19):** Put your emotions to rest and deal with financial and business matters using common sense. Put your cash where it makes a difference instead of letting it burn a hole in your pocket. Pay down debt, implement efficient home improvements and cap your festive spending. ★★★

**AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18):** Don't feel you must keep up with the neighbors or get involved in something that doesn't interest you because someone else does. Consider your options and do what's best for you. Don't jeopardize your health and well-being to please others. Tidy up loose ends. ★★★★★

**PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20):** Pay attention to your cash flow. Emotional spending will put you in debt. Be aware of subscriptions, scams and other hidden costs that can make you vulnerable. An attitude change toward saving will ease your mind and help lower debt. ★★

**Birthday Baby:** You are innovative, disciplined and opportunity-driven. You are influential and cooperative.

★: Avoid conflicts; work behind the scenes. ★★: You can accomplish, but don't rely on others. ★★★: Focus and you'll reach your goals. ★★★★★: Aim high; start new projects. ★★★★★: Nothing can stop you; go for gold.

## SUDOKU

Conceptis Sudoku

By Dave Green

9	6	2					5	3	1
								9	4
1	4		3		2	7			8
6		9		8		4			
2	7	1	4	5	6				
3			2						7
4								7	3
	1	7	9	3			8	2	6
	2								

Sudoku is a number-placing puzzle based on a 9x9 grid with several given numbers. The object is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that each row, each column and each 3x3 box contains the same number only once. The difficulty level of the Conceptis Sudoku increases from Monday to Saturday.

Last Friday's Answer

8	9	7	2	3	6	5	1	4
6	4	3	7	1	5	2	8	9
2	1	5	4	8	9	7	3	6
3	2	6	1	9	7	4	5	8
5	7	4	8	2	3	9	6	1
1	8	9	6	5	4	3	2	7
9	5	8	3	7	1	6	4	2
7	6	2	5	4	8	1	9	3
4	3	1	9	6	2	8	7	5

Difficulty: ★

12/11

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## WONDERWORD

By DAVID OUELLET

**HOW TO PLAY:** All the words listed below appear in the puzzle — horizontally, vertically, diagonally and even backward. Find them. Circle each letter of the word and strike it off the list. The leftover letters spell the WONDERWORD.

CHINESE HOT POT

Solution: 9 letters

F L A V O R E T S Y O N I O N  
A E R E R U T A R E P M E T O  
E T E E W S P R O U T S L A O  
L T N N L N G I N G E R E M D  
O U R M I A I R I C E K C O L  
B C U R M S E H U T O C T T E  
S E B A S L I M T O H O R M S  
T S R B R R U C O F T I A S  
E E O A E E B I C U M S C E S  
R S T O C T L M D M H E A T A  
E A H I U A S O A I S E N S B  
P M P N N E N I D L S N R U A  
P E A T R O F M O C S H A B E  
E E R N O K I A D O O F A E S  
P O R K B E L L Y O H C K O B

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12/11

Beans, Bok Choy, Broth, Burner, Cilantro, Comfort, Cook, Cuisine, Daikon, Dine, Dish, Electric, Flavor, Ginger, Heat, Herbs, Lamb, Leaf, Lettuce, Lobster, Meal, Menu, Noodles, Onion, Oyster, Peanut Butter, Pepper, Pork Belly, Recipe, Rice, Sea Bass, Seafood, Sesame, Sprouts, Steam, Stew, Stock, Sweet, Table, Temperature, Thin, Tofu, Tomato, Udon, Warm

**Last Friday's Answer: Decorating**

To purchase WONDERWORD books, visit www.WonderWordBooks.com, or call 1-800-642-5480. (In Canada, call 1-855-232-2367)

## STUMPED?

For answers to today's crossword, call 1-800-226-5955! 99¢ per minute, touch-tone/rotary phones. (18+ only.) A King Features service, NYC.



# Davis leads Lakers to In-Season Tournament title over Pacers



**LAS VEGAS** (AP)—As Commissioner Adam Silver prepared to hand LeBron James the MVP trophy of the inaugural NBA In-Season Tournament, he cautioned that “it doesn’t come with a franchise.”

James bent over in laughter, but he has been serious about wanting to own an NBA expansion team in Las Vegas.

For now, he’ll more than settle for the individual honor and tournament championship after scoring 24 points and adding 11 rebounds Saturday night to help the Los Angeles Lakers beat the Indiana Pacers 123-109 in the final.

“My enthusiasm about being here post-career, bringing a team here has not changed,” James said. “The fans are amazing here. They have everything already: WNBA team, they have a baseball team (Athletics) coming in soon, NFL team, hockey team, F1 (Formula One) was just here. This is a place that loves great attractions, and I think the NBA will be another great addition to this city.”

As well as James played Saturday, the star was teammate Anthony Davis, who had 41 points and 20 rebounds—numbers that would have been season highs if they counted. This is the only game in the tournament that doesn’t figure in the standings or statistics.

Davis also shot 16 of 24, had five assists and blocked four shots.

“They’re a hell of a one-two punch,” Lakers coach Darvin Ham said about James and Davis. “That one or two could be either one of them on any given night. At the end of the day, they know how to take it to the next level when everything is on the line.”

Los Angeles is the first In-Season Tournament champion because the two headliners received plenty of help.

Austin Reaves scored 28 points, D’Angelo Russell added 13 points and Cam Reddish set the tone defensively by limiting the damage by Indiana’s Tyrese Haliburton, who emerged as one of the faces of this tournament.

He had 20 points and 11 assists against the Lakers, often passing to a teammate rather than trying to force the action.

“(Reddish) didn’t score a lot (nine points), but I felt like he was one of the best players on the court with the way he defended and really changed the game on that end of the floor,” Reaves said.

Also for the Pacers, Bennedict Mathurin scored 20 points and Aaron Nesmith had 15.

In addition to taking home a trophy, Lakers players on-



Los Angeles Lakers forward LeBron James, center, lifts the the NBA Cup while celebrating with teammates after they defeated the Indiana Pacers 123-109 in the championship game in the NBA basketball In-Season Tournament on Saturday, Dec. 9, 2023, in Las Vegas.

standard contracts each made \$500,000 and the Pacers received \$200,000 apiece. Players on two-way deals take home half those amounts.

The tournament and the title game had a combination of

a NBA playoff and one-and-done NCAA Tournament kind of atmosphere, and the Pacers and Lakers played as if their seasons were on the line.

Los Angeles making it Las Vegas where it was essentially

the home team before a sell-out crowd played Sunday like it had been here before. The situation was different for the Pacers, who are still trying to prove they are a championship-level team.

“We just got outplayed tonight from the start of the game to the end of the game,” Haliburton said. “Just didn’t do the job on loose balls, didn’t rebound, didn’t get enough stops when needed. They just out-

played us, and it’s frustrating. It’s funny because everybody says this has the NCAA Tournament feel, but after a game like that you’re sitting in the locker room going, ‘Most of us ain’t graduating.’ We play on Monday.”

The Lakers led most of the game, though Indiana kept in striking distance until Los Angeles went on a 15-3 run late in the fourth quarter to turn in a 100-96 lead into a 115-99 advantage.

“Our guys got a real taste of what the elevated stage is all about,” Pacers coach Rick Carlisle said. “It’s so important to have this experience, to feel the intensity, to feel the glare and the glow and to find out what it means to be totally together in an effort to conquer it. We conquered a lot of challenges along the way. This one tonight was a little too steep.”

Among those in attendance were basketball Hall of Famers Julius Erving and Shaquille O’Neal, football Hall of Famers Tim Brown and Shannon Sharpe, former tennis star Steffi Graf, former boxing champion Floyd Mayweather Jr., chef Bobby Flay and rapper Flavor Flav. Members of the two-time champion Las Vegas Aces, including WNBA Finals MVP A’ja Wilson, also watched.

## As inaugural In-Season Tournament draws to a close, Adam Silver looks ahead to possible tweaks

**LAS VEGAS** (AP)—NBA Commissioner Adam Silver seemed more than satisfied by the way the inaugural In-Season Tournament went this season, though noted that it’s only natural to expect some tweaks to the format before next year.

Silver, speaking Saturday before the Indiana Pacers and Los Angeles Lakers met in the event’s first championship game, said new elements like the brightly painted courts and cash incentives for team success were generally a hit.

“I want to thank all the players in the league, the coaches and of course the teams for embracing this new concept,” said Silver, who pushed for years to have such an event—similar to what’s done in many soccer leagues around the world—added to the NBA calendar. “I know it doesn’t come without challenges. There’s no doubt there’s some things that we’re learning this time through. Overall, we’re thrilled with the interest we’ve seen so far this season.”

There’s nothing that is certain to change before next year, though one possible item that is set to be discussed is the tiebreaker format from group play—which included point differential, something that many players said they didn’t like.

“It’s all about respecting the game and respecting your op-

ponents,” Boston forward Jayson Tatum said last month on that point. “So, that part, I’m not a fan of.”

Silver said if fans found the point-differential portion to be unsportsmanlike, the league may look to other options.

“I’m not ready necessarily to move away from it,” Silver said. “But if ultimately there’s going to be a sense particularly from our American fans that it’s somehow an indication of poor sportsmanship, that’s not a good idea for us to be doing it. And maybe there’s some ways to tweak that.”

Silver addressed several other topics, including:

### JOSH GIDDEY

The league continues to investigate allegations that Oklahoma City Thunder guard Josh Giddey had an improper relationship with a female. But the status of that probe is unclear, given that the Newport Beach, California, police department is also investigating.

In a since-deleted post from a now-deactivated account, an anonymous social media user last month said a girl who is seen with Giddey in videos and photographs was a high school junior at the time.

“When there’s a parallel criminal investigation, we do take a back seat to the criminal inves-

tigation,” Silver said.

### JA MORANT

Silver said he would personally “check in” with Memphis guard Ja Morant in the coming week, as the Grizzlies near the 25-game mark of the season.

Morant was suspended for 25 games after he was seen flashing a handgun in a video that was posted online. The video of Morant showing a gun while sitting in the passenger seat of a car was posted after he finished serving an eight-game suspension in March for another video in which he displayed a handgun in a Denver-area strip club.

Morant apologized in both instances.

Silver said Morant has “complied with everything he’s been asked to do” in the return-to-play program that was laid out by the league when the 25-game suspension was levied.

The earliest Morant could play is Dec. 19, when the Grizzlies visit New Orleans. That game is the second half of a back-to-back and it isn’t clear how quickly the Grizzlies will re-insert their franchise player back into the lineup.

### CHRIS PAUL VS. SCOTT FOSTER

It is perhaps the league’s weirdest rivalry, the one pitting Golden State guard Chris

Paul against NBA referee Scott Foster. Paul, a 12-time All-Star, has been openly critical of Foster many times over the last several years.

After he was ejected from a game by Foster last month, Paul revealed that the friction stems from a years-old issue that involves his son. He did not elaborate.

“Scott Foster is one of the best, the most highly rated referees in this league,” Silver said. “And obviously, Chris’ record stands for itself. They are two people I have enormous respect for and they need to be professional about this. Chris and I have now talked directly and there are issues we have to work through. But again, it’s my expectation that everyone’s going to be professional about it.”

### VICTOR WEMBANYAMA

San Antonio rookie Victor Wembanyama—the No. 1 pick in this year’s draft—got rave reviews from Silver, even though the Spurs are off to a dismal start to the season.

San Antonio is 3-18 and on a 16-game losing streak.

“Victor Wembanyama has been a terrific addition to the league,” Silver said. “He’s a wonderful young man. ... I know the Spurs are very encouraged by his play on the floor. Obviously, it’s not

representative in wins yet, but he’s a young, developing player in this game.”

Wembanyama, who stands nearly 7-foot-4, doesn’t turn 20 until next month. He’s averaging 19 points and 10.2 rebounds.

### THE NBPA

Silver said the NBA’s relationship with the National Basketball Players Association is “business as usual,” even after the union saw a change in its leadership last month.

Executive Director Tamika Tremaglio stepped down less than halfway through her four-year term and was replaced on an interim basis by four-time NBA champion Andre Iguodala.

“I had no idea any changes were coming,” Silver said. He added that he has no other knowledge why there was a sudden change in union leadership.

### DAVID STERN

Silver was asked if the league is considering putting the name of former Commissioner David Stern—Silver’s predecessor—on one of its trophies, including those for the In-Season Tournament.

The notion has been discussed, and the league hasn’t decided how best to honor Stern in that capacity—yet.

“Stay tuned,” Silver said.



# Zappe throws for 3 TDs, Pats damage Steelers' playoff hopes with win



**PITTSBURGH** (AP) — The wins used to come so easy and so often for

David Andrews early in his career with the New England Patriots, the veteran center barely noticed them.

That hasn't been the case in 2023. Not with the franchise enduring its worst season in nearly a quarter century and with potentially seismic changes looming.

So yeah, there was a sense of relief after a 21-18 win over Pittsburgh on Thursday night, a throwback of sorts to the Patriots' many big wins over their longtime AFC rival, albeit with far lesser stakes.

The offense that's looked lost for a month gained some momentum behind Bailey Zappe's three touchdown passes. The defense got the stops when necessary and New England (3-10) ended a five-game losing streak while damaging Pittsburgh's increasingly brittle playoff hopes.

"No one has quit in this locker room," said Andrews, a two-time Super Bowl champion. "We're fighting, we're working. We're trying to get better. That's all you can do. That's all you can ask for. It hasn't been perfect."

No, it hasn't. That didn't stop the Patriots from coming



New England Patriots quarterback Bailey Zappe throws during the first half of an NFL football game against the Pittsburgh Steelers on Thursday, Dec. 7, 2023, in Pittsburgh.

## Pats' victory over Steelers shows support for embattled Belichick after 5-game losing streak

By JIMMY GOLEN  
AP SPORTS WRITER

With all of Bill Belichick's accomplishments over two decades in New England, he's never pulled this off before.

The six-time Super Bowl champion — one of the greatest coaches in NFL history — had his players rallying to his defense in an attempt to end a five-game losing streak and perhaps even save his job.

"I just feel good we could get it done for Bill and the rest of the coaches," safety Jabrill Peppers told ESPN following the 21-18 victory over the Pittsburgh Steelers on Thursday night. "I don't really like all the flak he's been getting. Because it's on us as players to go out and execute."

The Patriots (3-10) scored three first-half touchdowns — as many as they'd had in the previous four games combined — and held on for their first win since Week 7. In his second start since Mac Jones was benched, Bailey Zappe threw for a career-high three touchdowns, completing 19 of 28 passes for 240 yards.

"We've been through a lot these past couple of weeks," receiver JuJu Smith-Schuster said. "For us, especially as an offense to go out and put points on the board, to help our defense out, (there's) so much relief."

Belichick, 71, has guided

the Patriots to six NFL titles since arriving in New England in 2000, along with three other conference championships and 17 AFC East titles in 19 seasons for what is one of the greatest dynasties of the league's Super Bowl era. He has won 332 games (including playoffs), second on the NFL's all-time victory list behind Don Shula.

But Belichick's pursuit of the longtime Miami mentor had stalled as the Patriots skidded to the bottom of the AFC standings, and it is now likely he will try to catch Shula from another sideline next season. Asked Friday about Peppers expressing his support, Belichick said: "Yeah, well, that's great. But I would say the big thing for me is what I appreciate is what the players do every day."

"Obviously, a level of frustration with the overall season. But, on a week-to-week basis, you kind of put that aside and focus on the week that you have," he said.

### WHAT'S WORKING

The offense came to life after scoring a total of 13 points in the previous three games, including a 6-0 loss to the Los Angeles Chargers on Sunday in which it didn't reach the red zone. Hunter Henry had a pair of touchdown receptions, including one highlight-reel

catch to make it 21-3 midway through the second quarter. Ezekiel Elliott ran for 68 yards and also caught seven passes for 72 yards.

### WHAT NEEDS WORK

The special teams again hurt them, with a blocked punt setting up a Steelers touchdown that cut the Patriots' lead to 21-18 with 11 minutes left in the game. There was also a penalty with Pittsburgh lined up to punt that appeared to be an offside on New England's Jahlani Tavai, which would have given the Steelers a first down, but was inexplicably called a false start on the offense.

### STOCK UP

With No. 1 running back Rhamondre Stevenson injured, Elliott had a season high of 22 carries and a touchdown catch. He also had his highest total for receptions and receiving yards while providing his high in total yards from scrimmage in more than two years. Most importantly, Elliott chased down Mykal Walker after his third-quarter interception, pushing him out of bounds at the Patriots' 16 and preventing a likely touchdown.

The Steelers turned the ball over on downs after going for it on fourth-and-2 from the 8, meaning the seven points

saved could have been the difference in the 21-18 score.

"Zeke made a big play on the interception, keep them out of the end zone. Ended up getting a defensive stop on it. That was a huge play," Belichick said.

### STOCK DOWN

The victory put the Patriots two games behind—or is it ahead of—Carolina (1-11) in the race for the No. 1 overall pick in the 2024 draft. New England is tied for the second-worst record in the NFL with Arizona (which beat the Steelers on Sunday); the Patriots would pick before the Cardinals (3-10) because of an inferior strength of schedule.

### KEY NUMBER

3-1 — Zappe is 3-1 as an NFL starter, improving to 1-1 this season after winning both of his starts last season when Jones was injured.

### NEXT STEPS

The Patriots failed to fatten up on the cushy part of their schedule, going 1-4 against the Commanders, Colts, Giants, Chargers and Steelers. Now come the defending Super Bowl champion Chiefs, followed by the playoff-contending Broncos and Bills. The Kansas City game was flexed out of "Monday Night Football" to avoid a potential national TV blowout.

into Acrisure Stadium and doing something that's become routine through the years: changing the trajectory of Pittsburgh's season. And not for the better.

The Steelers (7-6) lost to a two-win team at home for the second time in five days, dropping them out of the top spot in the AFC wild-card race.

"This stings," Pittsburgh coach Mike Tomlin said. "But we'll be back."

Maybe. The Steelers play three of their final four games on the road, all of them against playoff contenders.

Hunter Henry had two touchdown catches for New England. Ezekiel Elliott had 140 yards from scrimmage — 72 receiving, 68 rushing — and caught a TD for the NFL's lowest-scoring offense, which reached the end zone three times for the first time since October.

JuJu Smith-Schuster added 90 yards receiving against the team he starred for earlier in his career.

"It means a lot," Smith-Schuster said. "You know, honestly, you know, starting my crew here and coming back here and getting a 'W,' I love being on this side of the ball, I'll tell you that."

It's a side of the ball New England has rarely been on in 2023. The losses have piled up at a rate not seen since coach Bill Belichick's first season in 2000. That was six Super Bowls and nearly a quarter-century ago.

For three hours on Thursday night, the Patriots found a way to do what they so frequently have done against Pittsburgh: make all the plays that matter. Belichick improved to 15-4 against the Steelers and 10-3 against Tomlin in this latest matchup between the league's two longest-tenured coaches.

Belichick coached his 507th game, moving past George Halas into second-place all-time behind Don Shula (526), but it's hardly a guarantee he'll be back for another season with the Patriots.

New England had totaled 13 points in its previous three games. The Patriots exceeded that in the first half, with Zappe hitting Elliott for an 11-yard score before finding Henry in the end zone twice to build a 21-3 lead, their largest of the season.

The normally stoic Zappe let loose when Elliott scored on the game's first possession, the first time all year New England has reached the end zone on its opening possession.

"It's really hard to score touchdowns in the NFL," Zappe said. "You've got to celebrate each one."

Touchdowns have been nearly as difficult to come by this season in Pittsburgh. Yet the Steelers have remained in the mix thanks in large part to their defense and an ability to thrive in tight games.

Pittsburgh, however, has lost two of its last three one-score games after winning its first six to start the season.

Mitch Trubisky completed 22 of 35 for 190 yards, passing for a touchdown and running for another while filling in for injured Steelers starter Kenny Pickett. Trubisky also threw an ill-advised pass in the first half that was picked off to set up the first of Henry's two scores, and he inexplicably threw deep to a well-covered Diontae Johnson on fourth-and-2 at midfield with just under two minutes left.

Pittsburgh got the ball back with 15 seconds remaining but had no realistic chance to score.

The Steelers managed 264 yards of offense, another step back for a group that briefly seemed on the verge of getting it together after offensive coordinator Matt Canada's firing before Thanksgiving. Pittsburgh piled up 421 yards the following week at Cincinnati, but the offense regressed in Sunday's loss to Arizona.

The Patriots, five days removed from a shutout loss to the Chargers in which they failed to reach the red zone, let alone the end zone, looked far sharper against a team that stressed it wouldn't overlook another also-ran.

It happened again anyway. Alex Highsmith left in the second quarter with a neck injury. Rookie Nick Herbig played the majority of the snaps in Highsmith's absence.



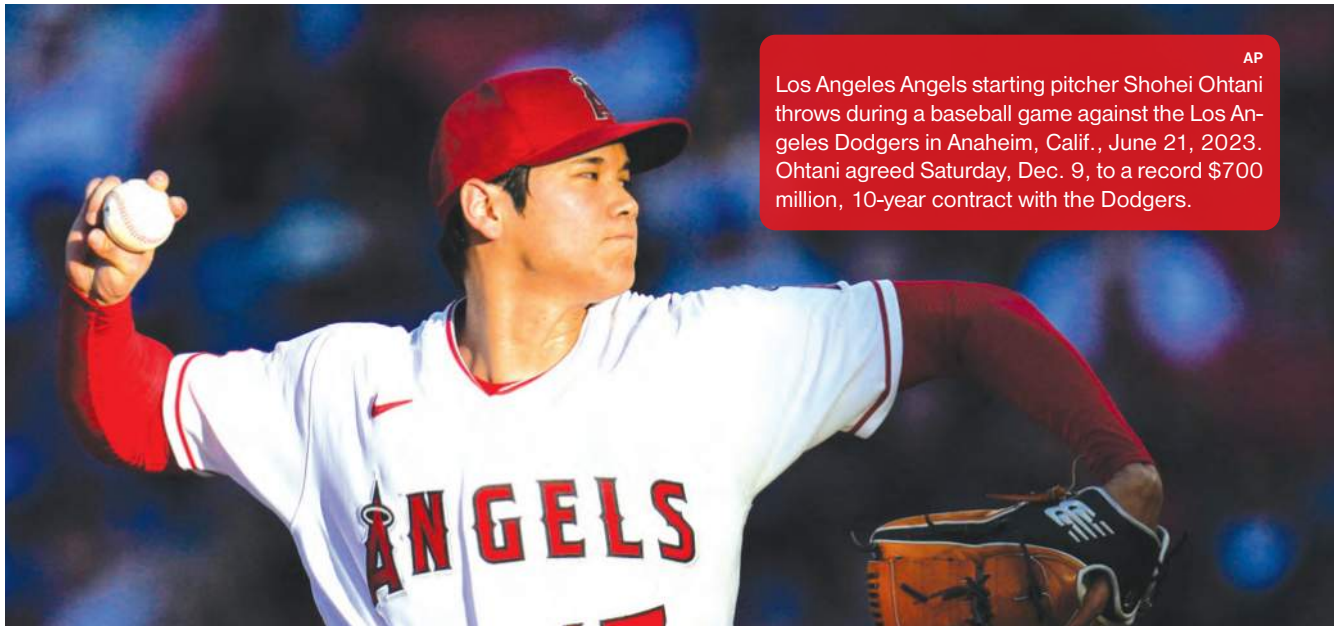
# Ohtani agrees to record \$700M contract with Dodgers



**N E W  
Y O R K  
( A P )** —

Shohei Ohtani has set a financial record to go along with his singular on-field performance, getting \$700 million to make a 30-mile move up Interstate 5 to the Los Angeles Dodgers.

His agent, Nez Balelo, issued a midafternoon news release Saturday announcing the 10-year contract, ending months of speculation that began even before Ohtani became a free agent on Nov. 2. In recent days, media and fans had tracked private plane movements and alleged sightings like detectives in attempts to discern the in-



Los Angeles Angels starting pitcher Shohei Ohtani throws during a baseball game against the Los Angeles Dodgers in Anaheim, Calif., June 21, 2023. Ohtani agreed Saturday, Dec. 9, to a record \$700 million, 10-year contract with the Dodgers.

comment by the Dodgers. Ohtani has not spoken with reporters since Aug. 9.

"I apologize for taking so long to come to a decision," Ohtani said in an English-language statement on Instagram. "I would like to express my sincere gratitude to everyone involved with the Angels organization and the fans who have supported me over the past six years, as well as to everyone involved with each team that was part of this negotiation process."

"And to all Dodgers fans, I pledge to always do what's best for the team and always continue to give it my all to be the best version of myself," he continued. "Until the last day of my playing career, I want to continue to strive forward not only for the Dodgers but for the baseball world."

Ohtani joins a lineup that also includes 2018 AL MVP Mookie Betts and 2020 NL MVP Freddie Freeman. The Dodgers won the NL West this year for the 10th time in 11 seasons before they were swept by Arizona in the Division Series in October.

Los Angeles begins the 2024 season in Seoul, South Korea, against San Diego on March 20-21.

Ohtani's decision came six years and one day after he first agreed to his deal with Angels.

Ohtani has redefined modern baseball since he chose the Angels as his first major league team. Nobody has come close to matching his achievements at the plate and on the mound, becoming one of the majors' elite players in both roles when healthy. Along the way, he has become one of the most marketable athletes in the world, a force when it comes to ticket sales, TV ratings and sponsorship revenue.

He was a unanimous AL MVP in 2021 and 2023—he finished second in 2022—winning this year despite injuring his elbow in late August and an oblique muscle in early September.

Ahead of his 30th birthday on July 5, he has a .274 average with 171 homers, 437 RBIs and 86 stolen bases along with a 3.01 ERA and 608 strikeouts in 481 2/3 innings. Ohtani has 34.7 Wins Above Replacement (WAR), per Baseball Reference.

## TE

From page 20

while third place was Jacob Yamagishi with 1,024.

Villagomez said after his win, "I feel great. I'm happy to be here, happy to be in the water, especially with all the support. It's good to be back."

About the competition, Villagomez said, "It was just like a regular day—just doing what I do and having fun surfing. Just being one with the water feels good."

The tricks that landed him the first-place win, according to the 20-plus-year surfing veteran, were the barrel roll tricks he made from the inside. "It's difficult to do and it's very shallow. I got scratches on my fingers," he said, as he showed his wrinkled and scratched up fingertips.

In the inaugural event last year, Villagomez competed but did not make it to the finals. Last year was also his first time back in the water after

losing his father and brother to ocean-related accidents. The emotional Villagomez dedicated his win to the both of them and said, "They're gone, but they're always with me out there for sure."

Villagomez said he will definitely compete again next year. "I come here often. This is my gym. After work, I come here, I clock in, and I do my thing." He then thanked his fellow boogie/body boarders. "They've been around helping me and getting me back here. Shuji gave me my first board to use in last year's competition. Before that, I was on a 10-year break, but now I'm back."

The organizing committee of Boogie Down at Obyan are board members of the Marianas Surf Skate League. The Boogie Down at Obyan organizing committee included director Joe Villacrusis, co-owner of Salty Skin Pacific; tournament director Edward Manibusan, who is the owner of Saipan Surf Company; and

media director David Cabrera, owner of the local shop Local Bones; and Salam Younis, co-chairman of the MSSSL.

Manibusan said after the event that it was a great success. "I think we were able to build upon last year's event. We also brought in surfers from Guam, which is huge for us. Even though we're different islands, different governments, we do have similar love for the ocean, similar love for the environment, and keeping our environment clean, keeping our beaches clean. We just want to keep that going every year as much as we can, along with the support of companies such as Marpac, TurnKey, and the government agencies that help us out and all our other sponsors."

Manibusan on Villagomez's winning first place said he always sees him out in the water and it shows because he knows the break. "It takes some experience...the folks who surf out there the most—they know the breaks, they know the currents, they can read the waves, faces

of the waves. "Te" is a really hard worker and I know he really wanted it as well from last year. So, it's really great to see him here. I just heard about his story, but I think he did it for himself and also for his family and loved ones."

With the women surfers who competed this year, Manibusan said that it's a big milestone for them and is looking at creating a separate women's division eventually.

Kaya Rasa, Kristina Anderson, and Guam's May Mendiola graced Obyan's waters and were the first women to compete in the competition. Mendiola made it to the finals and placed fourth overall.

Additional thanks were made by Manibusan to the participants, Department of Public Safety, Department of Fire and Emergency Medical Services, Division of Parks and Recreation, Saipan Mayor's Office, Marianas Visitors Authority, and Coastal Resource Management.

tentions of the two-time AL MVP with the Angels.

"This is a unique, historic contract for a unique, historic player," Balelo said. "He is excited to begin this partnership, and he structured his contract to reflect a true commitment from both sides to long-term success."

Ohtani's total was 64% higher than baseball's previous record, a \$426.5 million, 12-year deal for Angels outfielder Mike Trout that began in 2019.

His \$70 million average salary is 62% above the previous high of \$43,333,333, shared by pitchers Max Scherzer and Justin Verlander with deals they struck with the New York Mets. Ohtani's average salary nearly doubles the roughly \$42.3 million he earned with the Angels. It also exceeds the entire payrolls of Baltimore and Oakland this year.

His agreement includes unprecedented deferred money that will lower the amount it counts toward the Dodgers' luxury tax payroll, a person familiar with the agreement told The Associated Press. The person spoke on condition of anonymity because the details were not announced.

"He structured his contract to reflect a true commitment from both sides to long-term success," Balelo said. "Shohei and I want to thank all the organizations that reached out to us for their interest and respect, especially the wonderful people we got to know even better as this process unfolded."

This is perhaps the largest contract in sports history, topping highs believed to be set by soccer stars Lionel Messi and Kylian Mbappé.

There was no immediate

pare for plans to be made only to be thrown out the window and redrawn on the fly!"

What he is most proud of about the team was the ability to "persevere and compete alongside 23 Pacific Games Associations."

He then thanked his wife, children, and supporting family members for allowing him the opportunity to take part. He also thanked the Public School System and his Athletic Programs Team for supporting not only himself, but the vast number of students and staff.

He made special thanks to the 10 National Federations management, coaches, and athletes, "for their patience and understanding as we navigated the tough conditions, and finally to the [Northern Marianas Sports Association], and all of our sponsors for making the dream a reality and allowing Team NMI to send the largest ever delegation by way of chartered flight!"

said of their performance, "We had an exceptionally young team of swimmers that brought home medals in the relays and supported each other daily during week one of the Games, along with Isaiah Aleksenko's individual medal performances. I certainly congratulate them on a fantastic showing in the pool."

There were also a number of student athletes in the 10 sports NMI participated in and Gross said they all competed at "high levels." He said of those young athletes, "Hopefully, we can keep many of these athletes engaged and continue to train for regional competitions slated for '24 and '25."

Gross thanked the young adults and veterans in the team for "their continued leadership and ability to focus under tough conditions. Very proud of their accomplishments and leadership exhibited throughout!"

With the seemingly tumultu-

ous yet rewarding experience in the 19 days in the South Pacific from Nov. 15 to Dec. 2, Gross believed that the team "grew tremendously as individuals and as a team over the course of so many days away from the luxuries of home. It's not easy to leave life behind and get through the daily hurdles of staying appropriately hydrated, arranging transportation to and from training/competition venues and making sure to get to the dining hall during their hours of operation, but somehow, some way, they overcame and competed well."

As for his personal experience as the team's chef de mission, he said, "I'm thankful for the opportunity to lead Team NMI throughout these Games. The privilege was certainly worth the headache and frustrations that came with the position." The biggest lesson he learned from the experience, he said, was that, "Like so many things in life, pre-

## TEAM

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along with a new Pacific Games record in the women's 5K and numerous personal bests and national records being set. I remain in awe of our ability to rise to the challenge and compete!" said Gross.

The team was a mixture of the youth and veteran athletes, and for many of the young athletes, it was their first time to compete on such a huge scale. Gross said, "Between battling with the environmental challenges, and more importantly, lack of reliable WiFi/data, I'm thankful that our team managers and coaches were able to keep these student athletes focused on competitions while still dedicating time daily to keep up with their studies."

Gross acknowledged that despite not having a pool to train on Saipan, the young swim team collected as many medals as they could. Gross

enough to take the first boys high school softball title.

The Ayuyus were made up of Igitol, Diaz, Camacho, Achilles Evangelista, Jeremiah Suel III, Joell Borja, Chris Diaz, Andre Iguel, Justin Camacho, Terrel Rabago, and Noah Agnon.

## AYUYUS

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lineup, plus a home run from the leadoff batter.

From there on out though, the Ayuyus continued to bring in runs as their defense held long





Davis leads  
Lakers to  
In-Season  
Tournament title  
over Pacers.

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# Saipan Tribune Sports

Ohtani agrees  
to record  
\$700M  
contract with  
Dodgers.

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SAIPAN TRIBUNE

## 'Te' is '24 Boogie Down at Obyan champ



LEIGH GASES

Vincent "Te" Villagomez surfs the lip of a wave during the finals of the 2nd Annual Boogie Down at Obyan last Sunday.

By LEIGH GASES  
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REPORTER

After a 10-year hiatus from the ocean, Vincent "Te" Villagomez made an epic return and was one with the waves this time around to claim the 2nd Annual Boogie Down at Obyan title.



Villagomez outperformed 12 other surfers, including three competitors from Guam, and three women, over the two-day weekend competition at Oby-

an Beach and was crowned the champion yesterday.

Despite a 30-minute delay in the finals showdown due to safety concerns, Villagomez swept up the competition and barrel rolled his way to first place after he collected

the most points of 1,208 from the competition's three judges—Linus Mizutani, Shuji Takanobu, and Vince Tudela.

Second place went to last year's bronze medalist, Solomon Castro with 1,198 points,

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By LEIGH GASES  
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REPORTER



Team NMI's performance at the 2023 Pacific Games in Honiara, Solomon Islands was nothing short of impressive and

### 'Team NMI exceeded expectations'

definitely exceeded expectations, as attested by its chef de mission Nick Gross.

The team returned to Saipan on Dec. 3 and brought home with them five gold, one silver, and seven bronze

medals for a total of 13—the most ever by Team NMI in the Pacific Games.

"Team NMI exceeded expectations at the Games! With the most medals ever earned...

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LEIGH GASES

In this file photo, Team NMI poses for a photo before the opening ceremony of the Pacific Games in Honiara, Solomon Islands. The team collectively won 13 medals—five gold, one silver, and seven bronze medals—the most ever for NMI's participation in the Pacific Games.



LEIGH GASES

First place Vincent "Te" Villagomez showers in beer during the awards ceremony of the 2nd Annual Boogie Down at Obyan last Sunday.

## Ayuyus claim 1st boys HS softball title

By LEIGH GASES  
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REPORTER



The Kagman High School Ayuyus slugged their way to the championship of the Inaugural SBL-PSS Interscholastic Boys High School Slow Pitch Softball League 2023-2024.

The Ayuyus were undefeated throughout the season and faced off against Rota's Dr. Rita Hocog Inos Jr./Sr. High School Bucks in the finals and won, 12-8, last Dec. 2 at the Capital Hill Softball Field.

It was a close game as both teams were evenly matched, but the Ayuyus showed why they were undefeated and pulled away in the sixth inning with Angelo Igitol's explosive grand slam for a commanding 12-6 lead.

The Bucks tried to make for a comeback but the six-run deficit was too big an ordeal to overcome and they could only spare two more runs in the last inning.

The Ayuyus' power lineup of U17 national team baseball players overpowered the



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Kagman High School is the Inaugural SBL-PSS Interscholastic Boys High School Slow Pitch Softball League 2023-2024 champion after their finals game last Dec. 2 at the Capital Hill Softball Field.



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Rota's Dr. Rita Hocog Inos Jr./Sr. High School Bucks claimed second place after their finals game against Kagman High School in the Inaugural SBL-PSS Interscholastic Boys High School Slow Pitch Softball League 2023-2024 last Dec. 2 at the Capital Hill softball field.

softball diamond from the start of the season until the finals. Jon Diaz and Justin Camacho scored two runs in KHS' first at bat against RHI followed by a solo homer by Diaz in the

second inning to lead, 3-0.

However, the Bucks replied at the bottom of the second and took a 1-run lead after three runs scored at the bottom of the

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